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THE
SPIRIT
OF THE
ECCLESIASTICKS
Of all Sects and Ages,

As to the
Doctrines of Morality,
And more particularly the Spirit of the
Ancient Fathers of the Church,

EXAMIN'D,
By Mons. *BARBETRAC*, Profeffor of Laws
and History in the Univerfity of *Laufanne*.

Translated from the French by a GENTLEMAN of
Gray's-Inn.

WITH A
PREFACE by the Author of the
Independent-Whig.

LONDON: Printed for J. Peele at Locke's Head
in Pater-noster Row. 1722. Price One Shilling.

THE
SPIRIT
OF THE
COLLEGIATE
OF all Ages




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WITH A
PREFACE by the Author of the
Independent Magazine

LONDON: Printed for J. Park at Leake's Head
in Fleet Street near 1722. Price One Shilling.



THE PREFACE.

HE following Papers are a Translation of Part of Mr. Barbeyrac's Preface to his Translation of Puffendorf's Treatise of the Law of Nature and Nations, into French, and fully shew, in a small Compass, the Spirit and Parts of the Fathers of the Primitive Church, so much extoll'd, and so little deserving it.

The Reading of the Fathers, and an Acquaintance with the Fathers, has made a great Noise in the World, as a momentous Study, entitling the Proficients in it to a high Character, and the Reputation of Learning. Few People had Leisure to read them, and fewer would take the Pains, and now I think most Men agree that the Pains are not worth taking; and he who employs his Time that Way, whatever Industry he may have, is neither envied for his taste, nor admir'd for his Acquirements, unless by those whose Applause Men of Genius are not fond of. There is not much Glory to be got in an Employment where, to excel in it, nothing is requir'd but great Drudgery, eminent Patience, and no Taste, or

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a wrong one. A Clown may exult and swagger, because he is an accomplish'd Ploughman; but I would rather he should have the Renown than I; though a good Ploughman is a good Character in a Country, and, in some Instances, a drudging Pedant, who is the Ploughman in the Learned World, is likewise a useful Character. It might be, however, wish'd, that they would preserve the Distance and Humility of Ploughmen, and not value themselves so much upon meer Sweat and Digging.

As to the Fathers, there is so little to be learn'd from them, that they who know much of them, are only esteem'd by such as know little of any Thing. Nor was there ever any Thing more insolent and dishonest than to refer us for the Knowledge of the Scriptures to the Fathers, who were so very ignorant of them, that they almost constantly understood them in every Sense, but the true Sense. They have such an Appetite for Vision, Mystery, and Obscurity, that in the plainest Texts they find Difficulty, Darkness, Allusion, and Enigma's; and explain obvious Passages just as they do doubtful ones, by far fetch'd and mysterious Guesses, and Meanings, which contradict common Sense, and which none that had it would have thought of. A plain and natural Meaning which every Body could see, would not serve their Turn, but they must extort a Meaning, and so have the Glory of the Discovery; and their Thoughts like their Language were forc'd and bombast. And to these Men, who made the Word of God of none effect, by darkning his plainest Precepts with false Glosses and Figures, we are sent for Instruction in that Word.

Whoever has seen Solomon's Temple Allegoriz'd by John Bunyan, may find there a Specimen of the Sagacity and Abilities of the Fathers in explaining of Scripture.

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Scripture. According to John there was not a Nail in that Temple, but had its Typical Purpose, and every Bason, and Pair of Tongs prefigur'd some great Mystery to come; and, in short, every Stone and every Tool in the Temple prophesied. And in all this the poor pious Linker did but tread in the Steps of the Fathers, without knowing it. As he had much more honesty, and a more quiet and beneficent Spirit than any of them; so he had as much Invention and was full as equal to the Business of Allegory as the best of them, and his Fancy was not more heated than theirs; and whoever reads his Pilgrims Progress need only suppose himself reading one of the brightest Fathers in English; and he will make them no ill Complement; for his Imagination, which was a very good one, was really more regular and correct than theirs. I have often thought the Rosicrucians a Sort of Modern Fathers; only they are more sublime in their Reveries: They deal alike in the same Puffry, false Rhetorick, and their Imaginations are alike inflam'd and extravagant.

It is irrational and impious to suppose that Almighty God, the good, the merciful God, would give to his Creatures Instructions, Commands, and Advices, which were puzzling, obscure, or uncertain, when their Eternal Salvation was depending upon their conceiving and applying them aright. And yet these Fathers suppose all this, in fetching from his Word Inferences and Meanings, which upon reading it seem as different from it as any one Language is from another. It is but Justice to the Omnipotent Being to believe that he speaks candidly and intelligibly to his Creatures, and to all his Creatures, whenever he speaks to them at all: But this Justice the Fathers deny him, when they make him thus say one Thing, and mean another.

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And no more is it to be suppos'd, that the Father of Mercies would cruelly impose upon us, an impossible Thing for a Duty; I mean that of agreeing with the Fathers, who never agreed with one another, nor indeed with themselves. No People upon the Earth, ever differ'd more (no, not their Successors) nor proceeded to greater Fury and Bitterness in their Differences. They were constantly quarrelling about the smallest as well as the greatest Points; and for the smallest as well as for the greatest, they damn'd one another. It is to be hop'd, we are not to learn our Religion from those who wanted Charity; nor our Charity and Meekness from Men that were perpetually quarrelling, and cursing each other.

They indeed contradicted the first Principles of the Gospel, by turning Meekness, Humility, and Self-denial into Pride, Riches and Domination; and claim'd all Things, by Vertue of a Gospel that gave them Nothing. Are these Patterns, for such as would renounce the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and live Sober, Righteous, and Godly in the World? Does their Sainting of Villains and Assassins, as sometimes they did, entitle them to the Character and Reverence of Saints? Does their eternal Contention and Contradiction, qualify them for the Center of Unity? Is their turbulent Spirit, and their wild Want of common Sense; their ravenous Avarice, and flaming Ambition; their Fury and Fighting, their frequent Change of Opinion, their Apostacy and Murders; I say, are all these, or any of them, proper Marks of the Guides of God's People? And that these Marks belong to many of the Fathers, and all of them to some, is too manifest. The following Sheets will prove that they do: Indeed, their own Writings, and all Ecclesiastical History, do little else but prove it.

We have often heard the Dissenters charg'd with Fanaticism, and their best Writers have been call'd Fanatics,

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ticks, by Men who reverenc'd much greater Fanaticks, whilst they reverenc'd the Fathers, who far out went in Fanaticism, even the wildest Sectaries that appear'd in England, during the late long civil War; nor were the Ranters, Sweet-Singers, Muggletonians, Fifth Monarchy Men, or any of them all, more stark mad with Enthusiasm, than the Fathers were; who, besides the Turbulency of their Behaviour, by which they brought many and heavy Evils and Persecutions upon the primitive Christians, asserted Principles utterly irreconcilable to human Society, as well as to Religion and Reason. Jacob Behmen was not a greater Visionary, nor vended more devout Dreams.

I thank God, we can understand the Scriptures without the voluminous and contradictory Ravings and Declamations of the Fathers, who have equally perverted the Religion of Jesus, and the Religion of Nature; both which are clear enough to those that will see them, and do mutually confirm each other. There is as much Difference, and indeed Opposition, between the New Testament, and the Writings of the Fathers, as there is betwixt the Pentateuch and the Talmud; which, by its Fables, Forgeries, and wild Inventions, has mangled, darken'd, and perverted the short and plain History of Moses; nor are the Dreams, Fables, and Absurdities of the Fathers more sacred, or less glaring and extravagant, than those of the Rabbies. Never were such ridiculous Commentators upon Texts; and where a Child that could but read, would not have miss'd their Meaning, the Fathers have miss'd it. They were so far from understanding, applying, explaining or improving the amiable and evident Moral of the Gospel, that whoever wou'd look for it in a Place where he is sure not to find it, need only read the Fathers; and I should think very meanly of our Country Curates, if most of them cou'd not compose Systems of Divinity, more Rational and Scriptural than any of the Fathers ever compos'd. Thus

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Thus much I thought proper to say here concerning the Fathers, by way of Preface to the following Papers. Whoever wou'd see more elsewhere, may read the learn'd Dr. Whitby's late Latin Treatise entitl'd Disquisitiones Modestæ, and Mr. Marvel's short History of Councils, and Daillé of the Use of the Fathers.

I am

The Reader's most humble Servant,

The Independent Whig.



T H E



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
M O R A L I T Y.



WO Sorts of People ought, in a particular Manner, to apply themselves to Morality, viz. The Public Ministers of RELIGION, and the LEARNED, or those *who profess to cultivate their Minds by the Study of the Sciences.* The one and the other are equally obliged to inform themselves upon this Head, and to instruct the Ignorant as much as lies in their Power; but the Obligation of the first is more binding and indispensable, than that of the last.

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It is certain, that ^a MORALITY is the Daughter of RELIGION, that she keeps even Pace with her, and that the Perfection of Morality is the Measure of the Perfection of Religion. A great Emperor and Pagan Philosopher has own'd this: ^b "Thou wilt never, said he, do any thing purely Human in a right manner, unless thou knowest the Relation it bears to Things Divine; nor any Thing Divine, unless thou knowest all the Ties it has to Things Human." In effect, the fundamental Principles of Natural Religion, which ought to be the Basis of all Religions, are the most firm, or rather the only Foundation of the Science of Morality. Without the Divinity, Duty, Obligation, Right, are, to speak the Truth, ^c but fine Ideas, which may please the Mind, but will never touch the Heart; and which, in themselves considered, can never lay us under an indispensable Necessity of acting or not acting, after a certain Manner. The Ideas of Order, Agreeableness, and Conformity to Reason, have, without Doubt, something real; they are founded on the Nature of Things, upon certain, most true Relations: Even such as don't discover them distinctly, and in all their Extent, have a confused Notion of them: Our Minds are formed after such a Manner, that they can't help assenting to them as soon as propos'd; and 'tis thus that the *Honestum* has in all Times made an Impression upon Men of the most unciviliz'd

^a Mr. and Mad. Dacier's Preface to the Moral Reflections of Mark Antony, Pag 2.

^b Οὐτὶς γὰρ ἀνθρώπινόν τι ἀρετὴν ἔχει καὶ θεῶν συναναφορὰς ἐν ἀρεταῖς ἔχει ἐμπλαῖν. Marc. Antonin. l. 3. Par. 13. Ed. Gatakeri, & Par. 12. In Mr. Dacier's Version.

^c See Barbeyrac's Notes on Puffend. l. 2. c. 3. Par. 19. Not. 2. and c. 4. Par. 3. Not. 4.

civilized Nations. But, to give these Ideas all the Force they are capable of, to make them able to keep their Ground against the Passions, and private Interests; it is necessary there should be a superior Being, a Being more powerful than we are, which may compel us to conform ourselves to them invariably in our Conduct, that may bind us so, that it may not be in our Power to disengage ourselves at Pleasure; in a Word, that may lay us under an Obligation, properly so called, to follow the Light of our own Reason. This Fear of a Divinity, that punishes Vice, and rewards Virtue, has so great an Efficacy, that although the fundamental Principles of Religion should be obscured by the Mixture of Error and Superstition, provided they are not entirely corrupted and effaced, it does not fail to act up to a certain Point. The more pure, and the better supported these Principles are, the more they serve to strengthen the Foundations of Morality, and to push the Rules of it in all their Consequences. But compose the finest System in the World, if Religion stand for nothing in it, it will be, if I may so speak, but a Speculative Morality, you will build on the Sand. This being the Case, it was natural, that the Public Ministers of Religion should make Morality their principal Study, in order to conform themselves to it in all their Steps, and to give the People just Ideas, capable of producing solid Virtue. But they have been far enough from doing all that they ought, and might have done in this Respect. Among the Heathens, the *Divines*, the *Soothsayers*, and the *Priests*, who declar'd the heavenly Oracles, and called themselves the Interpreters of the Will of the Gods, never gave themselves the Trouble to teach Men the Rules of Virtue. And it must be confess'd, that Les-

sons of sound Morality, in their Mouths, would have been very ill match'd with the frightful Ideas they gave of the Divinity, and the Weaknesses, Imperfections, or even Vices, which they attributed to him by a strange Subversion of all the Lights of Reason. Accordingly we see, that the ancient Doctors of Christianity have very lively reproached the Pagans with this unlawful Divorce of Religion from Morality. ^d Those who teach the Worship of the Gods, says Lactantius, take no Notice of any Thing that may serve to regulate Manners, and the Conduct of Life: They do not in the least search after Truth, but apply themselves only to learn the Ceremonies of Divine Worship, which requires only the Ministry of the Body, and in which the Sentiments of the Heart have no Part. ^e The Pagan Philosophy and Religion, are two Things quite distinct one from the other. Morality has its particular Doctors, who do not teach the Manner of approaching the Gods: And Religion has likewise its Ministers, who do not teach the Rules of Morality. From whence it appears, that there is no true Morality, nor any true Religion. In Reality, as Mr. Bayle has observed, ^f " It " would be very difficult to prove, That the Pa- " gan Priests required any thing besides the Out- " side of Piety, That they press'd Amendment of " Life, and taught, That without a sincere and " lasting Repentance of the Irregularities of the " Heart,

^d Nihil ibi (in deorum cultu) differtur, quod proficiat ad mores excolendos, vitamque formandam, nec habet inquisitionem aliquam Veritatis, sed tantum modo istum colendi, qui non officio mentis, sed ministerio Corporis constat. *Instit. Divin.* l. 4. c. 3. num. 1, 2. Ed. Cellar.

^e See *Id.* *Ibid.* num. 4. See St. Augustin de Civitat. Dei, l. 2. c. 4. & 6.

^f Continuation de pensees diverses, Art. 49. p. 223. See Mr. Lock's Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 305.

" Heart, Vows, Offerings, Processions, Sacrifices,
 " Ordinary or Extraordinary Sacrifices, could ne-
 " ver appease the Anger of the Gods.—— It is
 " much more easy to prove, that they left the
 " World in this convenient Delusion, that it was
 " sufficient to be bountiful towards the Gods, and
 " to follow the Formulary of Rites and Cere-
 " monies. The Satyr of *Perseus* may convince us
 " of this, where he thunders against those who
 " make a Bank of Religion: And immediately
 " after calls upon the Priests to declare, what can
 " be the Efficacy of Gold in Holy Things. ^s But
 I desire to know of you, ye Priests, of what Service is
 this Gold, which is in the holy Places? Of just the
 same Service as the Puppets, which young Girls offer
 to Venus, are to her. Why should not we offer to the
 Gods something which neither the Cotta's, nor the
 Messala's, with all their magnificent Basons fill'd with
 the Flesh of their most exquisite Victims, can present
 them with? Why should not we offer to them an up-
 right, sincere, generous, Soul, pierced with the most
 lively Sentiments of Justice and Honour? I desire no
 more than this to present them with, and I'm sure of
 obtaining whatsoever I shall ask, though I should sa-
 crifice to them nothing better than Salt and Meal mingled
 together ^h.

" Is not this insinuating that the Priests were
 " the People that fomented that mercenary Tem-
 per

^s Dicite, Pontifices, in Sancto quid facit aurum?
 Nempe hoc, quod Veneri donata à Virgine Pupæ.
 Quin damus id superis, de magnâ quod dare lance
 Non possit magni Messalæ lippa propago,
 Compositum jus, fasque animi, sanctosque recessus
 Mentis, & incoctum generoso pectus honesto,
 Hoc cedô, ut admoveam templis & farre litabo:

Perf. Sat. 2. vers. 69, & seq.

^h *Vid. Dryden's English Translation of Perseus.*

“ per, that Trade and Business of Devotion, that
 “ reigning Abuse, which made People profuse
 “ in their Victims and Offerings to the Gods,
 “ imagining that the celestial Powers (as much
 “ delighted as Men, with Presents of Gold and
 “ Silver,) would grant whatsoever they should
 “ request at their Hands? — It does not ap-
 “ pear whether these Priests were Men of Learn-
 “ ing, or had philosophiz’d upon the Nature of
 “ the Gods : But we have ground to believe,
 “ that they had not Vertue and Probity, enough
 “ to teach Men to place a much greater Confi-
 “ dence in the Purity of the Heart, than in
 “ the exterior Practices of divine Worship, and
 “ the Expences of Religion. The Gain of the
 “ Priests would have been too much lessen’d,
 “ had the People follow’d the Maxims of the
 “ Philosophers. ” To all this let me add a
 Passage of *Socrates*, in that Dialogue of *Plato’s*,
 which bears the Name of *Eutyphron*. that is to
 say, of the Person with whom *Socrates* is intro-
 duc’d speaking. He was a Soothsayer, and *So-*
crates seems in his Person to reproach all Priests,
 and other Persons of that Character, with being
 very reserv’d, and loath to communicate their
 Knowledge and Understanding : By which, in
 all Probability, he particularly means that which
 relates to Morality, as is insinuated by the Op-
 position he makes of their Conduct, to that which
 he observes in his Dialogues, which ordinarily
 turn upon this Science, and whose only Tendency
 is to make Men better, and to inspire them
 with the Love of Vertue. Moreover the very Sub-
 ject of the Dialogue, gives us to understand clear-
 ly the false Ideas the Priests had in Matters of
 Morality,

ἰσως δὲ οὐ μὴ δοκῇ, σπᾶνιον σεαυτὴν παρῆεν, ὃν δὲ δαῖσκειν
 ἐκ ἐβέλιν π σεαυτὸ σοφίαν. Tom. 1. pag. 3. D. Edit. Steph.

Morality, for there we see *Entypbron*, who believes he's doing the best Action in the World, of his own pure Motion, led to inform against his own Father, in an Affair in which he pretended to convict him of Murder. It will perhaps be objected to me, what I have said ^k elsewhere, in one of my Notes, that among the *Pagans*, even the People knew, that Vertue is agreeable to the Divinity, and that Vice is odious to it: Whence it seems to follow, that the People were indebted for that Knowledge, to the publick Ministers of Religion. But there is a great deal of Probability, that these Sorts of Principles kept their ground among the People, either by an antient Tradition, or by the Remains of the Light of natural Religion, or by both join'd together; and that if the Priests did not teach downright the contrary, or if they even recommended Vertue sometimes, it was after a loose Manner, and without ever entering into an instructive Detail, of which they were, without Doubt, incapable. But this is sufficient for my Purpose, which is to shew, that among the *Pagans*, the publick Ministers of Religion who ought to have made Morality their principal Study, concern'd themselves with nothing less than that.

Among the *Jews*, it does not appear, that the Priests apply'd themselves to this Science, and after that there were no more Prophets among this chosen People of God, that is to say, a little after their Return from the *Babylonish* Captivity, the Doctors and publick Interpreters of the Law, begun insensibly to corrupt Morality; they were far from discovering its true Principles, and pushing them in all their Consequences, as they might easily have done, by the Assistance of Revelation, of
which

^k On Puffend. l. 2. c. 4. par. 3. Not. 4.

which they were the Depositories; but being wholly taken up with the Civil Law, or the Study of Ceremonies, labouring under carnal Prejudices, and scrupulously attach'd to the Letter of the Law, they did not apprehend, or even acted contrary to the Design of the Lawgiver. Upon Pretence that God, to accomodate himself to the Weakness of the *Jewish* Nation, had prescrib'd them a great Number of Rites and Ceremonies, they press'd the Exercise of that exterior Worship, and the formal Practices of Devotion, much more than Purity of Heart, and an exact Attachment to the Rules of Virtue; and which is worse, by their false Glosses and ^l humane Traditions, they came at last to destroy entirely divers of the most indisputable Principles of the Law of Nature; ^m they invented, for Example a thousand ridiculous Subtilities, to make Room to evade the Obligation of an Oath, and the most solemn Promises; ⁿ *If any one* (said the Scribes, and Pharisees, whom for this Reason *Jesus Christ* calls *Hypocrites and blind Guides*) *if any one swear by the Temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the Gold of the Temple, he is a Debtor. — Whosoever shall swear by the Altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the Gift that is upon it, he is guilty. — To pay Tithe of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith* It is one of the most pure Maxims of good Sense, that ^o all Vows contrary to a divine Law, are in themselves entirely void. Nevertheless the Priests, and the Doctors who depended upon them, finding their Account in Vows,

^l See *Matth.* 15. 3.

^m See *Matth.* 15. 3.

ⁿ *Matth.* 23, 16, 18, 23.

^o *1*ussend. l. 3. c. 6. par. 15. l. 4. c. 2. par. 8.

Vows made in Favour of the Temple, had the Impudence to maintain, that if any one had vow'd to God all that he could have given to his Father or his Mother, such Vow was lawful and irrevocable; so that after the Vow, that unnatural, or rather impious Child, was, according to them, not only dispens'd with assisting his Parents in their Necessities, but could not even do it in Conscience, because of the Obligation of his Vow. ^p *Whosoever shall say to his Father or his Mother, it is a Gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, ought not to honour his Father or his Mother;* this was their Decision. As God, for Reasons founded on the Constitution of the *Jewish* Commonwealth, had forbid the *Jews* to have much Communication with other Nations, and even expressly commanded them, to root out some of them, they conceiv'd Sentiments of implacable Hatred and Animosity against all the rest of Mankind. Thus a *Jew* look'd upon himself as dispens'd with, from doing any Office of ^a Humanity, or any Duty of ^r Civility, to all Persons of other Nations, unless they embrac'd the *Jewish* Religion; he even pretended to a Right of considering them as so many Enemies, on whom he was not only permitted, but even positively commanded to revenge himself, when he could do it without Punishment; and far from being able to set himself right as to these strange inhumane Opinions, by the Instruction of his Masters and Teachers, he confirm'd himself in them in their School. The *Pharisees*, big with the Opinions

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^p Matth. 15. 5.

^a See Juven. Sat. 14. 103, 104. Tacit. Hist. l. 5. c. 5. and the Parable of the Samaritan, Luke 10, 30. & seq.

^r See Matth. 5. 47.

nions of Judas Gaulonita, imagin'd, that there were none, but such as were Magistrates of their own Nation, and immediately establish'd by the Order of God, to whom they were bound to pay Obedience, from a Principle of Conscience; and upon this Foundation they ^f taught, that it was not lawful to pay Tribute to the Roman Emperour, though he was in the peaceable Possession of their Country; they likewise did *divers other Things of the like Nature*, as our Saviour Jesus Christ reproaches them in divers ^t Parts of the Gospel. The Doctors, whom the Jews have had in the following Ages, to this Day, have in this Respect only improv'd upon their Predecessors, as appears from the Extravagances, the detestable Maxims, and Impieties, of which the *Talmud*, and the Books of the *Rabbins* are full. We find in them, for Example, that it is no Harm ^v to curse the Christians: That it is not lawful ^w to succour an Idolater, when we see him ready to be drown'd, or in Danger of perishing by any other Way: That we ought not to perform the Function of a Physician to an Idolater, even when we could get by it a liberal Recompence, unless we believ'd that this Refusal would draw on us the Hatred

^f See Matth. 22. 17. Joseph. Antiq. Jud. l. 18. c. 1. & de Bell. Jud. l. 2. c. 12.

^t Mark 7. 13.

^v See Grotius's Letters, Part. 1. Epist. 122.

^w Maimonides de Idololatr. ex Vers. & cum Not. Dion. Vossii. in fine Tom. 5. Oper. Gerh. Joh. Vossii. Amst. 1700. Note, that this Rabbin is one of the most esteem'd, and most judicious among them. There are other Examples, of his detestable or ridiculous Maxims of Morality, in the Abstract of his Treatise of an Oath. Nouv. de la Repub. des Lettr. Jan. 1700. Art. 4. See also Basnage Hist. of the Jews, l. 4 c. 15. Here the Author cites divers vile Maxims of the Jewish Doctors.

Hatred of the sick Person, or we had Ground to fear some Harm from him : In this Case, say they, it is lawful to succour him, but on Condition, that he pay well for it ; for it is not lawful to succour him *Gratis*. * *Thus have these false Doctors corrupted the Purity of Moses's Morality*

Jesus Christ, during the Course of his Ministry, never ceas'd to combat and entirely confute the erroneous Maxims, and pernicious Glosses of the *Jewish Doctors*. He re-establish'd Morality in all its Purity ; he fully discover'd the true Sources, and gave, as to all the Duties of Men in general, and each one in particular, general but perfect Rules, entirely agreeable to Reason, and the true Interests of Mankind. His Disciples preach'd to all the Word this most holy Doctrine, by Means of which, well understood and explain'd, we may guide ourselves surely, in the Decision of all Cases imaginable : Nevertheless, even in the Times of the Apostles, there crept into the Church a great Number of false Doctors, who began to corrupt the Christian Morality, pretending that to it ^y ought to be join'd the Observation of the Mosaic Ceremonies ; although the Son of God had manifestly freed Men from the Obligation of submitting themselves to that Yoke, much fitter in itself to turn Men from true Vertue, than to maintain or produce it. There were likewise People, who teaching another Doctrine than that of *Jesus Christ*, ^z gave heed to Fables, and endless Genealogies, which minister Questions, rather than godly Edify-

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* Mr. Bernard, in his *Nouvelles*. October 1702. p. 46. Where he cites these loose Decisions of the Jewish Doctor.

^y See Paul's Epist. to the Romans, and Galatians, and Coloss. 2. 20. seq.

^z 1 Tim. 1. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. See 2 Peter 2. 1, 2.

Edifying, which is in Faith, and in Charity, which is the End of the Commandments, both of the Law and of the Gospel; rascally blind Doctors, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm, have turned aside unto vain Jangling. ^a There were others, that despised Government, who being audacious and self-willed, were not afraid to speak evil of Dignities; who holding Discourses full of Vanity and Folly, drew to them by the Lusts of the Flesh, and by Debauchery, People that had clean escaped from them who live in Error, who ^b chang'd the Grace of our God into Wantonness: Others, lastly, ^c That held the Doctrine of Balaam, who ^d taught Balack to cast a Stumbling Block before the Children of Israel, to eat Things sacrificed unto Idols, and to commit Fornication.

It is not therefore to be wondered at, that after the Death of the Apostles, and their first Disciples, the Evil encreased every Day more and more. The extream Fondness of the following Ages for ^e Fables and Allegories, ^f false Eloquence, and the Reveries of the Pagan ^g Philosophers; the profound Ignorance of the Art of just Reasoning, and of the right ^h Manner of interpreting the Holy Scripture;

^a 2 Peter 10. 18.

^b Jude ver. 4.

^c Revelat. 2. 14.

^d See Numb. 22. & seq.

^e See Biblioth. Univ. Tom. 10. p. 233. & seq. and M. du Pin in his Bibliotheque of Eccles. Auth. Tom. 1. p. 7. Edit. Hol. and Basnage's Hist. of the Jews, l. 3 c. 22.

^f See Ars Critica of M. le Clerc. Tom. 1. Part. 2. Sect. 1. c. 17. Par. 13. & seq. p. 347. & seq. Edit. 4. and Bibl. Univ. Tom. 12. p. 144. &c. 263, &c.

^g Bibl. Univ. Tom. 10. p. 181, &c.

^h See Defense des Sentim. de quelq. Theolog. d'Holl. &c. Lett. 14. Wotton on ancient and modern Learning, c. 23. Le Clerc. Epist. Crit. & Eccles. Epist. 4.

Scripture ; the Impetuosity with which Men abandoned themselves to the Motions of a heated Imagination ; the Ambition and Immorality of the greatest Part of the Ecclesiasticks, who were more jealous of their own Rights and Privileges, and more set upon discussing some Point of Discipline, or certain abstracted Questions, than careful to study Morality, and instruct the People ; the frightful Disorders, and scandalous Divisions which so often rent the Church ; the gross Abuses which from Time to Time crept into Practice, and which at last made a Reformation necessary, always so difficult to Attempt, and still more to execute ; the little Solidity we meet with in the greatest Part of the Writings we have left of Ecclesiastical Antiquity : All this gives us no Ground to believe, that the Study of Morality made great Progress in the World in those Times, notwithstanding all the Light of the Gospel : But that there may be no Doubt remaining upon this Head, let us enter a little on Particulars.

^k *Who does not know (says a Reformed Minister) that the greatest Part of the Fathers have wrote nothing upon Matters of Conscience ; and that those who have touch'd on it, have said nothing upon most Questions, the Decision of which is of Importance ?* In Reality, it appears by the Books which are come to our Hands, and the Catalogues of those that are lost, that most of those that are called *Fathers of the Church* never took Pen in Hand but to write upon Matters purely speculative, or Ecclesiastical Discipline. If they treated on Points of Morality,

'twas

ⁱ See, for Example, several Passages of Gregory Nazianzen, and Bibl. Univ. Tom. 18. p. 57, 92, 110, 119.

^k La Placette, de la Conscience, Liv. 2. c. 16. p. 190. Edit. 1.

'twas very rarely, or on a particular Occasion, and always in a loose immethodical Manner. The Sermons which they sometimes made upon these Sorts of Subjects, were so very full of the vain Ornaments of a false Rhetorick, that the Truth was, as it were, stifled under a Heap of Figures, and pompous Declamations. Most of the Maxims of Morality which they scatter'd in their Works, were drawn by the Force of Machines, and extravagant Allegories, from a Thousand Passages of Scripture, where quite another Thing was meant. To be convinced of this, we need only read the Collections which the ¹ bigotted Admirers of Ecclesiastical Antiquity have given us of such Thoughts as appeared to them the most beautiful in the Works of the Fathers. Moreover, these ancient Doctors of the Church, even in their least imperfect Treatises of Morality, perpetually ^m confound the Duties of a Man, and the particular Duties of a Christian, considered precisely as such; as also the Principles of Morality purely Natural, and those of the Christian Morality: On the other Hand, it often happens, that they make too great a Difference between the Man and the Christian; so that by carrying this Distinction too far, they prescribe impracticable Rules. Lastly, a very plain Proof of the little Care they take to cultivate Morality, is, that almost all of them are fallen into the most gross Errors upon that

¹ For Example, Mr. de Sacy's Commentaries on the Scriptures; and the ingenious Thoughts of the Fathers of the Church, collected by Father Bouhours, their profess'd Admirer. See what M. Bernard says of them, *Nouvel. de Septembre*, 1704, p. 282 to 286.

^m Buddei Hist. Juris Natural. *Par. 10. before his Selecta J. N. & Gentium.*

that Head. Let us run over the most celebrated among them, and they will furnish us with manifest Examples of what I have said.

^a ATHENAGORAS holds ^o the *Worship of Angels*, and says, that they were created to take Care of Things here below. He praises *Virginity*, condemns *second Marriages*, and calls them an ^p honourable *Adultery*.

The Work of *Clemens Alexandrinus*, entitled the *Pedagogue*, is a Book in which ^q he forms the Minds of Youth, and lays down for them Rules of *Christian Conduct*. In this Treatise, are scattered up and down divers *Maxims*, very severe, and different from the Customs of the present Times. It is a confused Heap of Precepts without Order, without Connexion, full of Declamations and Mysteries; in one Word, worthy of him, ^r who writes almost continually, without Order, and without Coherence, and who boasts himself, in another ^t Work, of having had a Design to cover and perplex Things, that so none but such as are very intelligent, and willing to take a great deal of Pains, might be able to comprehend them. There are, in the *Pedagogue*, divers Passages, which, in the Opinion of Mr. du Pin, ^v ought not to be read by every one. As *Clement of Alexandria* prefer'd in general the *Stoick Philosophy* to all others, there are likewise in that Work divers *Paradoxes*: " For Example, he ^w maintains, that ^w the *Christian* is the only rich Man. A Paradox very like " to

^a In his *Apology for the Christians*.

^o Du Pin *Bibl. des Auteurs Eccles.* Tom. 1. p. 65. Ed. d'Hol.

^p Διὸς ἐκ (γαμῶ) ἐν πρεπείῳ ἐστὶ μοιχεύειν. p. 298.

^q *Bibl. Univ.* Tom. 10. p. 218.

^r Du Pin in the Place above cited, p. 86: col. 2.

^s *Stromata* l. 1. 4. & 7. in fine.

^t In the above cited Place.

^v *The Life of Clement of Alexandria*, by M. le Clerc. *Bibl. Univ.* Tom. 10. p. 194.

^w L. 3. c. 6.

“ to that of the Stoicks, who said the same Thing
 “ of their wise Man. Those Philosophers express
 “ themselves thus : That *the wise Man is the only*
 “ *rich Man*; and Clement has changed nothing but
 “ the Word *Philosopher* into that of *Christian*. The
 “ Arguments he uses to prove his Proposition,
 “ are not very different from those of the *Stoicks*,
 “ as will plainly appear, by comparing what he
 “ says with the Explication *Cicero* gives of that
 “ Stoical Maxim, in his *“ Paradoxes.”* When he
 explains this Precept of the Gospel, *“ When they*
persecute you in one City, fly into another, he reasons
 upon the Principles of the *Stoicks*, who denied
 that Pain was an Evil : The Lord, says he, does not
 command us to fly, as if it were an Evil to be perse-
 cuted; and he does not command us to avoid Death by
 Flight, as if we ought to fear it. Our Doctor, in
 the following Part of his Discourse, founds the
 Commandment to fly, upon this, that otherwise
 we should give Occasion to the Persecutors to
 commit Murder: *Jesus Christ*, says he, would not
 have us engage nor assist any one to do Evil, &c. The
 chimerical Idea of the wise Man of the *Stoicks*, re-
 presented a Man entirely without Passions: So
 likewise Clement maintains, in another Place,
 that *“ A true Christian is free from Passions, even the*
most innocent ones, *“ except such as regard the Pre-*
servation of the Body, as Hunger, and Thirst, and
such like. Upon this Principle he pretends, that
Jesus Christ and his Apostles had *“ no Passions,*
 and

^w Paradox 6.

^x Stromat. l. 4. p. 503.

^y Whom he calls Gnostic (*γνωστικός*) that is to say, one that perfectly understands the Christian Religion.

^z L. 6. p. 649. Stromat.

^a Ib. le Clerc. Lectr. Crit. & Eccles. Epist. 1. p. 18, 19.

and that *Jesus Christ* himself had no Sense either of Pleasure or Pain; that he had no Occasion to eat, and that, if he did it, it was for fear of being taken for a Spectre. He likewise very incautiously justifies the Idolatry of the *Pagans*, where he says, that ^a *God gave them the Sun, Moon, and other Stars, that they might adore them, and by that Worship raise themselves to the true God*, A ^b Professor in Divinity, of the *Lutheran* Communion, has endeavoured to vindicate *Clement* upon some of the Mistakes I'm speaking of. But if we examine all that he says upon that Head, we shall find, that he does not succeed at all better, than where he maintains, that the *Pedagogue* and the *Stromata* are excellent Works, both in regard of the Morality, and of the Style and Method. The Analysis which he himself gives, is almost sufficient to perswade the Reader of the contrary to what he pretends to prove, and to shew the little Foundation of the magnificent Elogiums which he bestows on the Priest of *Alexandria*.

TERTULLIAN, to say nothing here of the Chimerical Visions and extravagant Austerities of the *Montanists*, which he was misled into, seems to carry a little ^c too far, in some Cases, this most true Principle, that all such as favour the *Wicked* in their Iniquity, or in any Manner whatsoever, contribute to Evil, are guilty; and to take Things strictly which may be excused; as for Example, the ^d bearing Arms for the Defence of the State; the adorning of Houses with Illuminations and Laurels, in Honour of Princes; to

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make

^a L. 6. *Stromat.* p. 669.

^b Mich. Fortschius Comm. in Offic. Ambros. Diss. 2. Par. 6. & seq.

^c Du Pin. Biblioth. des Aut. Eccl. Tom. 1. p. 102.

^d De Idololatria.

make use of the usual Ways of speaking, though they have some Relation to Idolatry. It is with the same Spirit, that vindicating, in his Book of the Crown, the Action of a Soldier, who had refused to put a Crown on his Head; he maintains, that Christians are absolutely forbid to put on Crowns, or even to bear Arms. He even calls those Plumes or Crowns, which Soldiers use to put upon their Heads, the *Pomps of the Devil*, and a Sin against Nature. When he declaims against Plays, he keeps within no Bounds, and gives blindly into false Sentiments, as, where he says, That it is ^c the Devil who puts the Buskins on the Actors, in order to make Jesus Christ lie, who has said, that no one can add a Cubit to his Stature. He asserts, that a Christian cannot in Conscience perform the Function of a ^f Judge, nor serve as an Executioner of Justice. He seems to maintain, that one cannot be an Emperor and a Christian at the same Time. In the Books of Monogamy, and Exhortation to Chastity, he condemns absolutely second ^g Marriages as Adultery. He maintains in his Book of avoiding Persecution, That it is absolutely forbidden to fly in the Time of Persecution, or to give Money to avoid being put to the Rack. After this, it is not to be wondered at, that he condemns Self-Defence against an unjust Aggressor, as contrary to Christian Patience. In order to prove this, he uses Reasons as weak and trifling as the Maxim is in itself hard and extravagant. He says, that the Gospel forbids, ^h without Restriction, to return Evil for Evil: That it is an Attack upon the Rights

^c De Spectaculis c. 23.

^f De Idololat. cap. 17, 19. & de Coronâ Militis c. 11.
See Dallæus de usu Patrum, l. 2. c. 4. p. 262.

^g Du Pin 103, 102.

^h De Patientia, p. 165. Ed. Rigalt. See Rigaut's Notes.

Rights of God, and the Homage we owe him, to arrogate the Power of defending ones self as we think proper; That when Jesus Christ said, *Judge not, lest ye be judged*, he requires a Patience carried to that Pitch; *For who is he that does not judge another, unless such a one as is patient enough not to defend himself?* After this Manner does *Tertullian* explain the Scripture, and on such Principles he founds the Maxims of Morality which he advances.

ORIGEN, in his Homilies, is full of Moral Instructions; but they are little else but Maxims of Morality, drawn from the Scripture by Force of Allegories, and told after a Manner not at all proper to touch the Heart, and to produce a reasonable Belief. It is well known, that this famous Doctor, taking in a literal Sense, by a very gross Mistake, these Words of Jesus Christ, *Some have made themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, put in Practice himself this mistaken Precept; and *Demetrius*, Bishop of *Alexandria*, before he became his Capital Enemy, admired this Action of his, as an Example of Heroick Virtue.

St. CYPRIAN^k was married at the Time of his Conversion; but “ From that Time forward, even
“ before Baptism, he preserved his Chastity, as
“ his Deacon *Pontius* tells us: Which shews that it
“ was the Opinion of those Times, that it was a
“ kind of Sanctity to live unmarried: An Opin-
“ ion which does not ill match with the Ideas of
“ Virtue in those Times, which were very often as
“ distant from the common Usage of Life, as the

D 2

Rhetorick

ⁱ Matth. 19. 12.

^k See *Cyprian's Life* by *M. Le Clerc*, *Bibl. Univ. Tom. 12.*
P. 215, 216, 217.

“ Rhetorick of the same Age, so much the more
 “ esteemed, in that it gave a very new Turn to
 “ Things. The one was almost as improper to
 “ procure the Good of one's Neighbour, and of the
 “ Community, as the other was to help us to
 “ understand clearly what was said, and to ac-
 “ quire just Ideas. *Cyprian*, not contented with
 “ having parted from his Wife, moreover gave
 “ all his Goods to the Poor. He had great Dif-
 “ ficulties to get over in parting from his Wife,
 “ and it was no small Mortification to him. It
 “ is very certain, that the Christian Religion
 “ does not command any Mortification, that serves
 “ to no Purpose: There was nothing more neces-
 “ sary to be enquired into, than whether a Per-
 “ son is in a better Condition to serve God,
 “ when he entirely abstains from a Thing,
 “ the Use of which has nothing Criminal in it,
 “ and which he can't help desiring, or when he
 “ continues the moderate Use of it. However it
 “ be, from the Time of *St. Cyprian*, this new kind
 “ of Continnence, which had been unknown to the
 “ precedent Ages, was regarded as a great Vir-
 “ tue. ¹ *St. Cyprian* scarce treats any Thing but
 “ in the Stile of a Declaimer, and often says the
 “ most common Things in so figurative and far
 “ fetched a Manner, that, if we don't keep our
 “ selves on the guard, we may easily imagine that
 “ all he says is of the last Importance. Unless
 “ he had had such a Turn as this, he would ne-
 “ ver have took so much Pleasure in the Reading
 “ of *Testullian*, who writes just after the same
 “ Manner. ^m Among the Arguments which he
 “ uses to perswade young Women to abstain from
 “ Luxury,

¹ *Ib.* p. 212, 213.

^m *Ib.* p. 232.

"Luxury, he says, "It is acting contrary to the
 "Will of God, to use Ornaments, as likewise to
 "blacken the Hair, since our Saviour has said, *You*
 "cannot make one of your Hairs White or Black; and
 "you, adds Cyprian, you attempt to surmount a
 "Difficulty, which God has declared to be in-
 "surmountable." A Reason, that either proves
 nothing, or proves, that it is not lawful to shave
 one's Beard, or cut ones Hair. St. Cyprian's entire
 Reasoning turning upon this Maxim: *All that*
grows naturally, is the Work of God; all that we change,
in any Sort, is the Work of the Devil. He seems to
 be not far remov'd from the false Ideas of Martyr-
 dom that prevailed in those Times, where "he
 "comforts beforehand such as having confessed
 "Jesus Christ, might not perchance obtain the
 "Honour of being Martyrs, because it might
 "happen, that the Persecution should cease before
 "they could be put to Death——Which sup-
 "poses a Disposition very different from the Sen-
 "timents of him who said when he was upon the
 "Point of undergoing the Punishment of the
 "Cross: *Ob that this Cup might pass from me!*" St.
 Cyprian, in his Treatise of the Usefulness of Patience,
 highly extols^p Abel for letting his Brother kill him
 without defending himself; thereby making him-
 self a Type of the Constancy of the Martyrs. In
 which, as on the one Hand, he guesses at a Cir-
 cumstance, of which there is not the least Footstep
 in the History of *Genesis*; on the other, he con-
 demns in this Passage, and elsewhere, the natural
 Right of Self-Defence. When he^q is to answer
 such

* De Habitu Virginum.

° Bibl. Univ. in the above cited Place, p. 248, 249, 250.

p De Bono Patientiæ, p. 214. Ed. Brem.

q Ib. p. 309. ex Ep. 59.

such as rebel against the Bishops, he uses an Argument, which proves the Obligation of obeying blindly "all Bishops elected with the usual Formalities," or it proves nothing. In his ^r Answer to a Letter of *Florent Pupian*, a Bishop of *Africa*, "He ^s equals the Bishops with the Apostles, and maintains, that it is insupportable Insolence to pretend to judge of them: That *Pupian* in particular was an insolent Fellow, to refuse to acknowledge *Cyprian* for a lawful Bishop, till he had been convinced in his Judgment of the Legality of his Election, since it would follow from thence, that for the Six Years that he had been a Bishop, he had no Right to administer any Sacrament, or grant Absolution to such as he had granted it to. Thus the Salvation of the People depended on the Validity of the Election of a Bishop; and the Validity of that Election depended on the Holiness of the Bishop—— Monstrous Principle, which makes the Salvation of Christians so uncertain, and renders useless the Virtue of the People, with all which they were to be damned, if the Bishop was not a good Man, and if he had been irregularly elected."

^r *LACTANTIUS* pretends, that a truly good Man ought not to bear Arms, or trade with any Foreign Countries. He absolutely condemns Usury, and looks upon it as a kind of Robbery. He carries beyond all Bounds the ^v Obligation of Christian Patience. He ^w maintains, that we ought to accuse no Man of a Crime punishable with Death;

^r Ep. 66.

^s Bibl. Univ. Ib. p. 332, 333.

^t Instit. Divin. cap. 17. l. 5. cap. 20. l. 6. c. 18.

^v See Puffend. de J. N. & G. l. 2. c. 5. § 14.

^w l. 6. c. 20.

Death ; and treats such an Action as Murder, without Distinction in any Case.

“ There are ^x very few Principles of Morality
 “ in *Athanasius* ; and those you meet with there,
 “ excepting what regards the Flight of Per-
 “ secution, Episcopacy, and the Defence of the
 “ Truth, are not so fully handled as they might
 “ be. ” This is the Opinion of a Roman Catho-
 lic Writer ; who likewise owns that the *Instructions*
^y of St. Cyril, are written in Hast, and without much
 Care.

Saint ^z BASIL, surnam'd the Great, holds, that
 be that gives another a mortal Wound, is guilty of Mur-
 der, whether he attacked the Person, or did it in Self-
 Defence. He declares, that it ^a is better to part
 those that have committed Fornication, than to mar-
 ry them together ; but that nevertheless, if they will
 marry, they should not be binder'd, for fear a greater
 Evil should happen. In the celebrated Letter to
 St. Gregory, in which he lays down Rules for a
 Monastic Life, there is one for the Regulation ^b
 of the Behaviour of Monks, which appears di-
 rectly contrary to that of *Jesus Christ* in the Gos-
 pel, (*Matth.* 6. 16, 17.) for this Father says
 that the Humility of the Solitary should appear in all his
 Behaviour ; that he should have the Eye sad, and look-
 ing down on the Earth ; his Hair discompos'd, his
 Garment nasty and tatter'd. In the little Treatise
 of reading ^c the Greek Writers with Profit, I find two
 or three very extravagant Maxims. He pretends
 that

^x Du Pin Bibl. des Aut. Eccles. Tom. 2. p. 54.

^y Ib. p. 143.

^z Ib. p. 179. ex Epist. 2. ad Amphiloch. Can. 43.

^a Can. 26.

^b Bibl. Univ. Tom. 25. p. 412, 413.

^c Homil. de legend. Græc. par. 7. Ed. Oxon. 1694.

that it is unlawful for Christians ever to go to Law. He seems to ^d understand literally these proverbial Words of *Jesus Christ*; *If any one strike you on the right Cheek, turn to him also the left*: And he finds that *Socrates* did something very like that, which is there commanded, when he patiently endur'd a severe Banging from an insolent Fellow, that was enrag'd against him. He believes, that it is ^e never lawful to swear; and thereupon proposes the Example of a *Pythagorean*, who chose rather to loose three hundred Talents, that is, about eighteen hundred Crowns, than take an Oath, though he could have done it with a safe Conscience.

GREGORY ^f of NAZIANZUM, writes *without much Order*. — His Style is *excessively full of Metaphors, very incorrect, and sometimes harsh*. —
 “ He ^g runs out against the Boldness of the *Arrians*,
 “ and *Macedonians*, who were at least as numerous
 “ as the Orthodox. and had the Impudence to
 “ meet together, and form Churches; horrible At-
 “ tempt after the Decision of a Council, so or-
 “ derly as that which had been ^h just then held!
 “ Gregory could not understand how his *Holiness*
 “ and his *Gravity* (this was the Manner of treat-
 “ ing Bishops in those Days; Gregory was writ-
 “ ing to *Nectarius*) could suffer the *Apollinarists*
 “ to meet together. — He thought, for what
 “ Reason I can't imagine, that allowing those
 “ People to meet together, was granting them
 “ that their Doctrine was truer than that of the
 “ Council,

^d Ib. par. 13.

^e Ibid.

^f See his Life by Mr. le Clerc. Bibl. Univ. Tom. 18. p. 23.

^g Ibid p. 114, 115.

^h The Council of Constantinople.

“ Council, since there could not be two Truths; as
 “ if the tolerating of any one, was signifying our
 “ Assent to the Truth of his Opinions! Lastly
 “ he exhorts *Nestarius*, to represent to the Em-
 “ perour, that *that* which he had done in Favour
 “ of the Church, would be of no Service, if the
 “ Hereticks should be allow’d to assemble toge-
 “ ther. Thus honest *Gregory*, who, whilst the
 “ *Arians* were most powerful, having the Em-
 “ perour of their Side, was against doing that
 “ which he blam’d in them, advis’d his Suc-
 “ cessour to forget that wholesome Lesson.”
 When the Emperour *Julian*, added Insult to his
 ill Treatment of the Christians, and despoil’d
 them of their Goods, telling them he only help’d
 ’em to observe the Gospel, which commands them
 to despise Riches, “ *Gregory* answers this, among
 “ other Things, that *Julian*, by using ’em after
 “ that Manner, must needs think that the Gods
 “ of the *Pagans*, were pleas’d to see People plun-
 “ der’d, though they had deserv’d no such Usage;
 “ and so of Consequence approve of Injustice.
 “ He might have been contented with this An-
 “ swer, but he adds that there are some Things,
 “ which *Jesus Christ* has commanded as necessary,
 “ and other Things, which he has propos’d sim-
 “ ply, for such as are willing to observe them,
 “ without laying any one under an indispensa-
 “ ble Obligation of doing it. Such, according to
 “ *Gregory*, is the Command to forsake the Things
 “ of this Life.” By which we see that he sup-
 poses a pretended Advice, to abandon ones Estate,
 when we have no particular Reason for so doing:
 Whereas it is a real Commandment, but which
 E is

is incumbent on us, only when we can't preserve our Goods, without breaking in upon our Duty, and violating some Maxim of the Gospel.

Saint^k AMBROSE carries the Esteem of Virginity, and Celibacy so far, that he seems to regard Matrimony as an indecent Thing. He says very plainly, that, *before the Law of Moses, and that of the Gospel, Adultery was not forbidden.* If he be loose upon this Head, he seems too rigid upon another, I mean, upon lending ^m Money to Usury, which he condemns absolutely, without any Exception. The Treatise of *Offices* is a Book which he wrote to teach Ecclesiasticks their Duty. *Although*ⁿ *the Name of Ministers, is struck out of the Roman Edition, and the following ones, it is found in all the Manuscripts, and it is plain by the Work itself, that St. AMBROSE, wrote it for the Ecclesiasticks.* But though he addresses himself to them, he likewise treats of the Duties of all Christians, of which he makes a particular Application to Ecclesiasticks. We see by the title, and the Manner in which he treats his Subject, that he design'd to imitate Cicero's *Offices*. But notwithstanding what has been said, by a ^o Lutheran Divine, who publish'd this Work at *Wirtemberg*, in the Year 1698, with some Dissertations of his own; if we except the particular Principles of the Gospel, which St. AMBROSE has scatter'd about in this Work, with the Examples and Passages of Holy Scripture, which he

perpe-

^k De Institut. Virgin. & passim alibi. See Dall. de Usu Patrum, p. 272.

^l Lib. 1. de Patriarch. Abrah. cap. 4. See Dall. ubi Supra. Mr. Bayle, Dict. Tom. 3. p. 2679. Not.

^m De Tobia c. 3. & 15. See M. Noodt de Foen. & Usuris l. 1. c. 4. c. 10. p. 64. & seq. and du Pin, T. 2. p. 256.

ⁿ Du Pin, T. 2. p. 257, 258.

^o Fortschius Professor.

perpetually cites, but generally very ill apply'd ; I don't stick to say, that the Copy is infinitely below the Original, whether you consider the Purity and Easiness of the Style, or the Composition of the Work ; and the Order of the Things contain'd in it, or the Solidity of the Thoughts, and Justness of the Reasoning : For Example, see here the Contents of the *First Book*. After a Kind of a Preface upon the Question, *when and in what Manner it is proper to speak or hold ones Tongue* ; he enters upon his Subject, in the 8th Chapter, with some Grammatical Remarks, which have no Foundation. In the 10th Chapter, he treats of good ^p Breeding, the first Part of which he makes to consist in *the Art of governing ones Tongues* ; in the 11th Chapter, he distinguishes two Sorts of Duties, the *Middle*, and the *Perfect*. He places in the Rank of the last, the Love of our Enemies, Prayers for such as calumniate us, or injure us in any other Manner, and the Works of Mercy. The 12th and following Chapters, to the 17th, turn upon the Subject of Providence, which he endeavours to establish and defend, the best he can, against the Murmurings of such as are expos'd in this World to great Afflictions, and against the Objections of Libertines and wicked Men. In the 17th and following Chapters, he treats of the Duties of Youth. Having spoken occasionally at the End of the 24th Chapter, of the four Cardinal Vertues, *Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance*, he begins his Discourse upon them, but very slightly, in the 25th Chapter, where finding himself the Disorder of his Discourse, he attempts to excuse, or rather justify it in these Words.

E 2

Perhaps

^p Mr. du Pin owns it in the above cited Place.

Perhaps it ^a will be said, that we ought to have begun our Discourse, with this Subject, since from these four Vertues, spring the different Sorts of Obligations: But that would have been, to conform to the Rules of Art, according to which we ought at first to have defin'd the Obligation, and afterwards divided it into the different Sorts. But we have designedly avoided tying ourselves up to these Rules: We are content with proposing Examples, taken from the Conduct of our Ancestors; that which is not difficult to be understood, and does not require the Subtleties of a methodical Writer. In the 28th Chapter, he very preposterously attempts to shew, the Falsity of two of the Functions which Cicero attributes to Justice; and this is not the only Passage where he criticizes without Reason, on the Pagan Philosophers, by mistaking their Sentiments, or relating Things that are most indisputable. Towards the End of this first Book, he returns to the Ecclesiasticks, whose principal Vertues he describes, and ends with a Discourse of the Sacredness of a Trust. He does not begin his Discourse of Blessedness till he comes to the Beginning of the 2d Book. The same Confusion and want of Method runs through the whole Work. He maintains that a Christian ought not to fight against a Robber who attacks him, and lays it down as a general Maxim, that it is never lawful to preserve ones Life, by occasioning the Death of another. He likewise lays it down as a general Rule, that one cannot lawfully do a Thing which is not expressly allow'd and authoriz'd by the Scripture; and on this Principle, he absolutely forbids the Ecclesiasticks, all Sorts of Raillery. It is not

^a L. 1. cap. 25. Inic.

^b Du Pin, p. 262. Ambros. l. 3. c. 4.

^c L. 1. c. 23. See Barbeyrac du Jeu. l. 1. c. 3. §. 3.

to be wonder'd at that he condemns (L. 1. Cap. 50) second Marriages: Divers others were of the same Opinion, as we have already observ'd, before his Time.

Saint CHRISOSTOM treating of Usury, gives into very extravagant Opinions, as divers other Fathers had done. The same Doctor, speaking of the Expedient *Abraham* us'd for the second Time, when he was afraid of being kill'd, if it should be known that he was the Husband of *Sarah*; makes no Difficulty of telling his Auditors: "*You w know very well, that nothing makes a Husband more uneasy, than to see his Wife suspected of having been in the Power of another; and yet, * this just Man does all he possibly can, that the Act of Adultery may be compleated.*"—He afterwards highly extols his Courage and Prudence.—Then he excuses him for having consented to his Wife's Adultery, upon this Account, namely, that Death, which had not as yet been despoil'd of his Tyranny, did at that Time inspire great Terroure. After this Elogium of the Husband, he passes to the Praises of the Wife, and says, that she heartily accepted the Proposal, and did all she could to play her *y* Part well in the Comedy. Thereupon he exhorts Wives to imitate her in this, and cries out: *Who can help admiring this great Forwardness of hers to obey? Who can sufficiently commend Sarah, for that after such Continence, and at her Age, she was willing to submit to ^z Adultery, and deliver up her Body to Barbarians,*

^r See M. Noodt de Foen. & Usuris, l. 1. c. 4. & 6.

^v Genes. cap. 20.

^w This is taken from Bayle's Diction. in the Article Abimelech.

Note A.

^x Homil. 32 in Genes.

^y Ibid.

^z Ibid.

“rians, in Order to save her Husband's Life? St. ^a Ambrose is no less lavish of his Praises of Sarah's
 “Charity; and St. *Augustin* fell into near the
 “same Illusion (in reasoning upon another Exam-
 “ple, ^a) It is a very strange Thing, that *these*
 “great Lights of the Church, with all their Vertue,
 “and all their Zeal, should not know that it
 “is not lawful to save ones own Life, nor that
 “of another, by committing a Crime.”

St. JEROME is ^b every where exclaiming against
 Marriage in General, and second Marriages in Par-
 ticular, and his *Invectives* are so bitter, and full of Rage,
 that with all the Softenings in the World, one cannot
 avoid perceiving, in ^c what he says upon that Head, an
 entire Conformity with the Sentiments of Tertullian,
 which were condemn'd by the Church as injurious to the
 Honour of Marriage, and contrary to the Holy Scrip-
 ture. “He condemns ^d all Oaths without ^e Ex-
 “ception. He ^f forbids Christians, to pay Tri-
 “bute to infidel Princes. He advises ^g and ap-
 “proves the Action of those, who kill them-
 “selves for fear of losing their Chastity. He
 “often speaks of Virginitie, and the monastic
 “Life, after a Manner which would almost make
 “one think it Necessary to Salvation. Labour,
 “Fastings, Austerities, and other Mortifications,
 “Solitude, and Pilgrimages, are the Subject of
 “almost

^a De Abraham, l. 1. c. 2.

^a See Bayles Dict. Art. Acindynus.

^b *These are the Words of* Dall. de Usu Patrum, p. 276.

^c Epistle ad Pammach, and elsewhere.

^d Du Pin, Tom. 3. p. 136.

^e Comm. in Matth. c. 5. and Zachar. c. 2.

^f In Matth. c. 7.

^g In Jonam.

"almost all his Counsels, and Exhortations." He gives ^h us to understand plainly enough, that *Jesus Christ* has abolish'd the Permission to eat the *Flesh of Animals*, in the same Manner as he has abolish'd Divorce and Circumcision. It is well known with what Fury and Knavery, he run out against *Vigilantius*, who had written against the Worship, which at that Time began to be paid to the Relicks of Saints and Martyrs, and against divers other Practices, which the following Times have but too much shewn the bad Consequences of. The little Treatise of *Jerom's*, against that Priest is full of gross scandalous Reflections, and false Reasonings, which tend to render ^k odious to the Populace, an Adversary whom he could not refute by good Arguments.

St. AUGUSTIN endeavouring to make an ^l Apology, for *Abraham's* Complaisance for his Wife, with Regard to *Agar*, pretends that a Wife may yield to another Woman, the Right she has to the Body of her Husband; and that the Husband may likewise transfer to another Man, the Right he has to his Wife's Body: And which is more strange, he founds this Paradox upon a ^m mistaken Passage of *St. Paul*. This Father dares to maintain, that by the Divine Law, all Things belong to the Just, or ⁿ Faithful, and that Infidels have

^h Dall. de Usu Patrum.

ⁱ I. 1. adv. Jovin. this Passage is cited in the canon Law, Dist. 35. can. 2.

^k See M. le Clere's Dissertar. At the End of his Logick, entitled de Argum. Theol. ab invidia ducto.

^l De Civit. Dei, l. 16. c. 25.

^m 1 Corinth. 7, 4.

ⁿ Epist. 153. Tom. 2. Edit. Benedictin. See Bayle's Philosoph. Comment. on these Words, Compel them to sin in. Part. 3. p. 130. & seq.

have no Right to what they Possess: An abominable Principle, and which overturns all humane Society. But see here another, which is not less odious, and which alone would extremely stain the Memory of the Bishop of Hippo; it is this, that after having been for Gentleness and Moderation, as to the Treatment to be observ'd towards Hereticks; the Disputes which he had with the Donatists so heated him, that he chang'd from White to Black, and maintain'd openly, that Hereticks ought to be persecuted, and forc'd to embrace the Orthodox Faith, or else to be quite rooted out, which is a very terrible and inhuman Opinion; as has been remark'd by a celebrated Minister of the Reform'd Persuasion. Every Body may read in *French* two ^p Letters of this Father, which were made use of to justify the last Persecution in *France*; and it may with Justice be said that St. *Augustin* is, in some Sort, the great Patriarch of Christian Persecutors. Let us well observe this Example, for it does not stop with the Bishop of Hippo, and he alone gives us a very sensible Proof of the Manner in which the Christian Doctors have neglected, or rather disfigur'd and corrupted Morality. If ever there was any Maxim, contrary to all the Lights of good Sense, natural Equity, Charity, good Politicks, and the Spirit of the Gospel, it is (without Dispute) this detestable Opinion of Constraint and Persecution, for the Sake of Religion. Nevertheless, ever since the Church began to enjoy Repose and Quiet, this has been the common Opinion, which in after Times was ordinarily reduc'd into Practice by

^o John Claud. Lett. at the End of his Book entitl'd l' Overture de l' Ep. aux. Rom. p. 129.

^p See the 3d Part of Bayle's Philos. Comment. and the 3d Vol. of le Clerc's Ars Critica, p. 353.

by the strongest Party, with regard to the weakest. The Codes are full of Penal ^a Laws, against Sects that differed from the prevailing one; and they were ¹ Councils, Bishops, and the most eminent Doctors, who either solicited the Promulgation of these Laws, or honoured with high Elogiums, Acclamations, Benedictions, and most humble Thanksgivings, the Sovereigns that had made these Laws, or that executed them with Vigour.

St. LEO in the Opinion of Mr. ² du Pin, does not much abound with Points of Morality; he treats them very dryly, and after a Manner that diverts, rather than affects.

In the Time of Theodosius the Younger, the Bishop of Susa a Royal City of Persia, whose Name was *Abdas* (or rather *Abdaa*) took the Liberty to burn one of the Temples, in which Divine Worship was paid to ^a the Fire. The King (his Name was *Isdegerdes*) being informed of it, sent for *Abdaa*, and after a very gentle Censure, ordered him to cause the Temple to be rebuilt, which he had destroyed. But the Bishop would do nothing towards it, notwithstanding the King threatened Reprisals on the Churches of the Christians; which he actually put in Execution, upon the obstinate Refusal of *Abdaa*, who chose rather to lose his Life, and expose the Christians to a furious Persecution, than obey so just and equitable an Order. ^b *Theodoret*, who relates this History, does not deny that the

F Zeal

^a See Bib. Univ. T. 23. p. 366. & seq. and M. Bernard Nouv. de la Rep. de Lettr. May, 1699. p. 574, 575, and April 1702, p. 409. and Supplém. to Philos. Comm. c. 29, 30, 31.

¹ Ibid. p. 355, 356. Thomasin de l'Unité de l'Eglise.

² T. 4. p. 164.

^a See le Clerc Bibl. Choisie Tom. 8. p. 321, & seq.

^b Hist. Eccl. l. 5. c. 39.

Zeal which led *Abdaa* to burn the Temple of the *Persians*, was unseasonable ; but he maintains that his Refusal to rebuild such a Temple was an Instance of Constancy deserving Admiration, and a Crown : For, adds he, it is as great an Impiety to build a Temple to the *Fire*, as to worship the *Fire*. “ But there are no private Persons, be they “ Metropolitans or Patriarchs, who can ever dis- “ pense with this Law of Natural Religion : One “ ought to repair by Restitution, or otherwise, the “ Damage which one does to his Neighbour. But *Ab- “ das*, a meer private Person, and Subject of the “ King of *Persia*, had ruined the Goods of another, “ and the Goods of another so much the more pri- “ vileged, in that they belonged to the Established “ Religion.——And it was a very sorry Excuse “ to say, That the Temple which he was to have “ rebuilt, would have served for Idolatry ; for it “ would not have been he that would have put “ it to that Use ; and he would not have been ac- “ countable for the Abuse which the Owners might “ have made of it. Would this be a valid Reason “ why a Man should not restore a Purse which “ he had robbed another of, to say, That he is a “ Man who spends his Money in Debauchery ?—— “ Besides this, what Comparison is there between “ the Building of a Temple, without which the “ *Persians* would not have ceased to be as much “ Idolaters as before, and the Destruction of several Christian Churches ?——In short, what “ was more likely to render the Christian Reli- “ gion odious to all Mankind, than to see that “ after they had insinuated it upon the Foot of “ People that only desired to propose their “ Doctrine,

“ Doctrine, they had the Impudence to demolish
 “ the Temples of the Religion of the Country,
 “ and to refuse to rebuild them, when the Sovereign
 “ reign commanded it”? But those Bishops reasoned upon Principles equally contrary to the Gospel, and the Law of Nature; in which, however, they did but imitate the Maxims^d and Conduct of St. *Ambrose*, upon a very like Occasion.

GREGORY *the Great*, according to Mr. ^c *du Pin*, is tedious, and sometimes too prolix in his Explications of Morality, and too subtle in his Allegories.——

His *Morals*, or Commentaries upon Job, are one of the greatest^e Repertories of Morality that is extant. But he scarce ever^g stops at the Explication of the Letter : He continually applies Moral Reflections and Allegories to the Text of Job, the greatest Part of which might as well be applied to any other Passage of Scripture.

What has been said is, in my Opinion, more than is necessary to shew clearly, that the most celebrated Doctors of the Church, for the first Six Centuries, are very bad Masters, and poor Guides in Matters of Morality. We said the same Six Years ago, when his Preface first saw the Light, and we don't retract it now we are publishing it a new, after a second Review. The Interest of Truth, which ought to outweigh all other Considerations but that of laying any Stumbling-Block in the Way of its Establishment; the Ease with which Abundance of People are dazzled by great Names, and by the Prejudice of Antiquity, especially

F 2

^d See the *Faßt* related with all its necessary Circumstances and Reflections in the Crit. Gen. de l'Hist. du Calv, de Maimbourg, T. 2. Let. 30. p. 275, &c.

^c Tom. 5. p. 144.

^e Ibid. p. 134

^g Ibid. p. 133.

cially Ecclesiastical Antiquity ; the inexpressible Injury which this blind Respect causes to the Knowledge of the true Religion, and sound Morality ; the Honour of the Age we live in, which, more than all the past Ages, has shook off the Yoke of an Authority destitute of Arguments ; the Candour and Sincerity of which we make a Profession ; all these Things require us to speak Things as they are in themselves, and to judge of these Doctors who have been dead for several Ages, with the same Disinterestedness and the same Liberty which we should do of an Author dead the last Century, and whose Reputation was entirely indifferent to us. As good Protestants we may, and ought to speak boldly, without putting our selves much in Pain what may be said or thought by those who think themselves concerned to declare their Jealousy of the Honour of the Fathers, and great Admirers of all their Productions, so far as to sacrifice to them the most common Rules of good Sense, which they would be very uneasy not to make Use of in other Affairs. They are unfortunate in being under this dire Necessity of judging so differently of the same Things, according as they come from the Pen of a profane Author, an Ecclesiastical, an Ancient, or a Modern. We don't even doubt but there are some, who do themselves Violence on this Head, and who, though they talk like other People, don't think from the Bottom of their Hearts so advantageously as one would imagine, of the personal Qualities and Writings of the ancient Doctors, who have made most Noise in the Church. It would be inhuman to insult those who live thus under perpetual Constraint, and we are sorry for it with all our Heart, provided they don't seek, or don't embrace without Necessity the Occasion of betraying their Sentiments.

Sentiments. But it is very hard to sit down easy, when one sees that People, who have here a full Liberty of thinking and speaking as they think right, and whose grand Principle is, or ought to be, that the Holy Scripture is the sole Rule of our Faith and Manners; that these People, I say, take the Part of the Fathers with so much warmth, and not content to be obstinately bent upon the Support of this visible Remnant of Popery, endeavour at any rate to lay others under the same Yoke, are out of all Patience with such as shew a less elevated Notion of the Fathers than that which they have formed to themselves, and inveigh most bitterly against the Living, to revenge the Dead, to whose Memory no other Injury is done, than that of not admiring blindly their false Sentiments, and shameful Conduct.

Certainly such as being born in, or having gone over to the Party of the Protestants, dare declare themselves so great Zealots and idolatrous Partisans of Ecclesiastical Antiquity, did not well consider Things, when they engaged in the Support of so bad a Cause: If they reflect upon it, they plainly see it can never turn to their Honour. This appears sufficiently from the Extremities to which they are reduc'd, not to let go their Hold. They perpetually change the State of the Question, they contradict themselves every Moment: They don't dare say in so many Words, that the Fathers were infallible, nor that they never fell into very gross Mistakes; and yet they reason as if they believed it, and would have others believe so; they build almost always upon this tacit Supposition; they confess in one Place, that which they have denied in others, and sometimes more than is required. In a Word, they so behave themselves as to give ground to believe, that by much reading and admiring the Fathers, they acquire

quire a Turn of Mind much like to theirs; by which they furnish us themselves with a new Reason and evident Proof of the Judgment we pass upon these ancient Authors, the Reading of whom produces such ill Effects; insomuch that by attempting to restore them to the too high Esteem, which Ignorance and Superstition had obtained for them, they in Reality decry 'em more than could or would those who believe they have just Reason to condemn them on divers Accounts.

Nor only so, but they also imitate their Passions, which discover themselves but too plainly in that which is come down to our Times of the Writings of the Fathers, and their Lives. To be in nothing behind their Masters, to Declamation, false Reasonings, a manifest Ignorance of Criticism and Morality, to the Contempt of Order and of Method, they join Rage and Invectives. They copy them so exactly that they become themselves very great Models: Reproaches run from the Source, and we must do 'em the Justice to own, that in this at least they shew a great Genius.

Mortified to see, that without being obliged to search long, or take much pains, divers Authors have given us a great Number of Examples of the false Reasonings and gross Mistakes, which are to be met with in the Works of the Fathers, instead of attempting to shew soberly and by good Reasons, that the Passages cited contain nothing but what's true and well thought of, which would be a sure and honourable Way of defending these ancient Doctors, whom they have taken under their Protection: Instead of this, I say, they content themselves with crying out, with haughty Scorn, *That it is the Fashion now a Days to attack the Fathers, that Ignorance thinks to recommend it self* by

by this Way; that such as rise up against them, do it with little Judgment and Knowledge. In which they themselves shew but little Judgment, since the Question here is no ways concerning that vast Erudition upon which they so highly value themselves. It is not necessary to understand all the Languages ancient and modern, nor to have read all the Fathers from Beginning to End: In order to judge of their Merit one need do little else, but take any Father you will, and open the Book, either in the Original, or in the great Number of Translations that have appeared. There are even whole Books, that are but a continued Thread of Lownesses heaped one upon the other, as for Example, St. *Augustin's* ^h *Commentary upon the Psalms*. We likewise find in the Collections of Sermons, in the Books of Devotion, in the Commentaries upon the Scripture, published in the Vulgar Tongue, an infinite Number of Blunders and Stuff of the Fathers, which their most zealous Admirers relate, as the Flower and Choice of fine and judicious Thoughts which they have observed in reading their Works. Thus all may judge now, with Knowledge of the Cause, whether the Fathers deserve the Elogiums given them, and the Warmth with which some undertake to defend them. A small Share of natural good Sense is sufficient, and never was the Reproach of Ignorance less to the Purpose, or worse placed. It is true, that such as bring such a loose dishonest Accusation, seem to have engrossed to themselves all the good Sense, as well as all the Learning in the World: One would imagine, they would not leave one Spark of it to any one that does not enter into all their
Notions,

^h See the Judgment of Mr. du Pin, *Bibl. des Auteurs Eccles.* &c.

Notions, or rather into all their Prejudices, into all their Passions, and all their Cabals. That which might make one suspect this, is, that there are among them some who are more civil and modest, than publickly to call it *Impudence*. For People to take the Liberty to think and speak otherwise than they and the Fathers think and speak, even upon Subjects where one does but follow the common Opinion of Protestants, as, upon the Lawfulness of Usury, to look down upon them in Compassion, from the Height of their Understanding; as People who, without any Tincture of Learning, attempt to signalize themselves at the Expence of almost all the famous Authors of the past Ages; such as dare modestly declare, that they have not so high an Opinion as these People of St. *Augustin* or St. *Jerom*; and to give themselves tacitly the Title of great Authors, which a confused hasty reading of abundance of Books, good or bad, has without doubt merited for them, and which the World will never envy them.

But that which fills up the Measure of Blindness and Passion: Our bigotted Champions of the Fathers don't stop at the Reproach of Ignorance; they draw into the Quarrel, besides, either directly or indirectly, the Probity and the Religion of such as openly tell both the good and the bad, with respect to the Lives and Writings of the Ecclesiasticks and Divines of the first Ages, and who believe that they were not more infallible, either in their Lives, or their Doctrine, than the Ecclesiasticks and Divines of the present Times. One of them dares affirm, without any Disguise, that *we should have a Veneration for the Fathers if we had a true Zeal for Christianity*; another, his faithful Eccho, *That the Contempt of the Fathers carried Men the greatest Lengths* (thus it is he calls the Freedom with

with which Men judge of the Fathers, without interesting themselves in their Reputation, but as far as Truth and Equity allow) *that this Contempt reflects upon the Christian Religion. If the Christian Religion*, adds he, *had not for Propagators, Men truly pious and knowing, What Opinion ought one to have of it?*

I acknowledge, that if Reasons which only tend to render odious the Opinion and Person of an Adversary, were good Arguments, this would be one of the best that was ever invented. All that is in it may be easily retorted. It must necessarily be, say you, that the Fathers, whom you regard as the Propagators of the Christian Religion, were Men truly pious and knowing. But it has been asserted, and prov'd by a great Number of Examples, that the Fathers have not only fallen into very gross Errors, and been very ignorant of abundance of Things; but that they have likewise suffer'd themselves, for the most part, to be led, more or less, by Passion and Humour, and that there has frequently been a good deal of Irregularity and Obliquity in their Conduct. You do not at all overthrow this, you don't give yourselves the Trouble to refute the Examples and Facts proposed to you, you pass Sentence of Condemnation upon that Head. Therefore you tacitly confess, that the Christian Religion is of no Value: You are a secret Atheist or Deist, who, under a false Pretence of maintaining the Interests of Christianity, by vindicating the Honour of those whom you regard as the Propagators of it, labour privily to overthrow Religion itself. It is very pretty indeed, for you to set up for a Zealot for Orthodoxy, or the received Opinions, which you defend only by odious Parallels, and malicious ill-natured Reflections: Very pretty, for you

to fathom the Depths of God, employ all the Subtilty of your Wit to explain them, and flatter your self with having found out new Solutions of the great Difficulties which in all Times have been raised on the Origine of Evil: Notwithstanding all this, if it be allowable to argue after the Manner you do, against those who do not esteem the Fathers enough for you, one would be ready to infer, even from your own Reasoning, some ill Design you have against the Religion, which you seem to engage for in this Dispute.

Heic aliquis latet error : Equo ne credite Teucris.

I leave it to judicious and disinterested Persons to judge, whether the Consequence be not at least as well drawn on this Side, as on the other.

However, we shall forbear using such Weapons: We freely leave them to such as have no better, and we have Charity enough to believe that this Action of theirs is no more than Imprudence. Blinded by Prepossession and Passion, doubtless they did not perceive the Advantage they gave both against themselves and the Christian Religion, by an Argument that appeared to them forcible, decisive, and proper to save the Trouble of examining Things to the Bottom, and to throw Dust in Peoples Eyes. But to undeceive them, if it be possible, and to hinder, at least, the Simple, or such as won't give themselves the Trouble to learn to distinguish good Reasonings from sorry ones, from being dazzled with this, let us shew a little the Weakness of it.

I observe, in the first Place, that those that can be properly called the *Propagators of the Christian Religion*, are the Apostles, on whom the Holy Ghost had conferred the Gift of Miracles,
and

and ⁱ guided into all Truth, concerning *Jesus Christ* and his Doctrine. These Holy Men ^k gained Disciples among all Nations, according to the command they had received from their Master. St. Paul, who valued himself upon preaching the Gospel in those Places only where *Jesus Christ* was not named, ^l least he should build upon another Man's Foundation, declares expressly, that from Jerusalem, ^m and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the Gospel of Christ, that is to ⁿ say, through a great Part of the Roman Empire. Tradition has preserv'd in the Indies, ^o and among other barbarous People, the Memory of the Travels and Miracles of St. Thomas, St. Andrew, and other Apostles. Thus the immediate Disciples of our Lord, filled with his Spirit, and armed with his Power, planted the Christian Faith in almost all the World; they laid the impregnable Foundation of this great Work, either by themselves, or by Means of some Apostolick Men, to whom they communicated the Gift of Miracles: And the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel, who succeeded them, but without any extraordinary Power, and with an infinitely less Authority, had nothing to do but to cultivate the deep Seeds which the Apostles had spread Abroad in all Parts, for the Propagation of Christianity, and which, by their own Virtue, aided by the Care of Providence, will always produce Fruit to the End of Time, whatever may be the Negligence or Malice of Men.

G 2

From

ⁱ John 16. 13.^k Matth. 28. 19.^l Rom. 15. 20.^m Ib. ver. 12.ⁿ See Cellarius's Dissert. entitled *Itinerarium Apost. &c.* Ital. 1700. Edit. 3.^o See Grot. de Verit. Relig. Christ. l. 2. Par. 18.

From hence it appears already, that even supposing that the Argument, we are speaking of, had any Force, it would prove nothing in Favour of the Fathers, since they are not properly the *Propagators* of the Christian Religion. But let us grant, since they will have it so, this glorious Title to the Fathers of the Church, as what may agree with them, in a certain Sense, and to a certain Degree: It will be very Easy at one Stroke, to destroy the Consequence that is drawn to shew what they ought to be, without examining what they really were. We need only consider one indisputable Thing, that is, that the Apostles themselves were for a considerable Time, fill'd with carnal Prejudices, and that they likewise had their weak Side: They do not disguise them, and the ingenious Confession they make, serves to confirm the Truth of their Testimony, and the Sincerity of their Intentions. Is there any Ground then for Astonishment, that the ordinary Ministers who succeeded them, and who were not favour'd with any extraordinary Assistances of Heaven, had not all that Justness of thinking, all the Lights, all that Integrity and Purity of Heart, which we could wish to find in them.

The *Propagators of the Christian Religion*, must necessarily (it is said) have been Men truly pious and knowing. But all such as have contributed any Thing, to the Propagation of Christianity, after the Apostles, must they needs have been such or only some of them? No one will offer to say the first: And if we leave only the last Part of the Question, I will ask, by what could we know, that this Privilege was reserv'd to such or such, rather than to others? Shall this be at the Time, in which they liv'd? But why must the Fathers
of

of the three or six first Centuries, have needs been *truly pious and knowing*, rather than those of the tenth or eleventh? It seems, on the contrary, that to reason on the Principle of this Question, in Proportion as we were farther Distant from the Beginning of the Establishment of Christianity, its *Propagators* ought to have had more conspicuous Piety and Talents, to encrease more and more the Progress of this holy Religion, and to supply that which the Proofs of the Fact, which are the Foundation of its Truth, lose of their Force, by the Distance of Time, in the Minds of Abundance of People, who are not capable of examining them as they ought to be. Will any one say that these *Propagators* of the Christian Religion, who ought to have been *truly pious and knowing*, are the Doctors whose Writings we have? But why these, rather than a great Number of others, who have wrote nothing, or whose Writings are not come to our Hands? Besides, What is meant here by being *truly pious and knowing*? Would they say that all the *Propagators* of the Christian Religion, from the Time of the Apostles, must of Necessity have had a Piety and Knowledge, in Matters of Religion and Morality, as great and as exact as possible? Were not the Fathers susceptible of some Weaknesses, some Passions, some Errors, some Portion of Ignorance? Must God have interpos'd in a miraculous Manner, to hinder them from being Men like others, and subject to the Failings of their Times, as well as to the Temptations of Circumstances they were in? Not to have so high an Opinion of them, as their bigotted Admirers, do we pretend that they were all Rascals, or that some among them were not truly pious, and knowing to a certain Point? If we maintain that they had not a just Turn
of

of thinking, that they have frequently us'd false Arguments, that they were utterly unacquainted with the Art of interpreting the Holy Scripture, and unfolding the Principles of Morality it contains; do we for all this deny, that they have retain'd the Foundations of Religion and Morality? If we say, that by an Effect of human Frailty, they indulg'd themselves, some more, some less in Passions, and Actions, contrary to the Rules of the Gospel; do we in this pretend to penetrate into the Heart, or the Councils of God? Do we deny that divers of them might not, with all this, be *truly pious* and good Men, and that the divine Mercy may not have Regard to their good Intention, and the Sincerity of a general Repentance? Certainly we leave to God the Judgment of that which we cannot, nor ought not to decide: We only reserve to ourselves, the Right of charitable Judgments, for which we shall always have more Inclination, than for rash Condemnations. But we are not for this, oblig'd to call Evil Good: We shall always boldly blame that which is blameable, without respecting a Fault in Favour of the Person: And as we Praise, and propose heartily to the Imitation of every one, the good Actions and Vertues, which appear in the Life of any Father of the Church, so we shall not disguise the bad Actions and Vices, which we can't help seeing, if we examine them, without Prepossession.

But to come to the very Bottom of the Argument, which I am examining, besides that, as I have already hinted, and shall say more of hereafter, the Fathers were neither the only, nor the principal *Propagators* of the Christian Religion after the Apostles; this Argument carries in it at most but a plausible Reason. But probable
Reasons,

Reasons, ordinarily not very solid, and that never go beyond a slight Probability, are perfectly ridiculous in an Affair like this. The Fathers, do they reason well or ill? Are they fallen in great Errors? Have they suffer'd themselves to be led to vicious Actions and Passions? Have they handled Morality exactly and fully? It is a Fact, we need only see whether it be true or false. We have the Pieces, the Books of the Fathers, and the History of their Lives: Let us read, examine, and then judge. The Question is not, after what Manner we conceive Things ought to have been: The Matter in Hand is, after what Manner they have actually been. For, if the Fact be true, instead of concluding, as they would have us, that the Fathers must needs have been such as they represent 'em to us, for the Interest of the Christian Religion; I will infer on the contrary, that this was in no wise necessary. To reason otherwise, is to imitate those of the Roman Communion, who, to prove that *Transubstantiation* is not a new Opinion and unknown to the first Ages, tell us gravely that it was not possible that this Opinion, should introduce itself into the Church, supposing it not to have been receiv'd from the Beginning. If with a profound Study of all the Subtilties of the Mathematicks, and an Affectation of being able to talk on all Sorts of Subjects, a Man should have his Mind no better turn'd, I am very much afraid, he would make the World take up a very bad Opinion of *Algebra*, and that vast Circle of Science, which he so much values himself upon.

Is it not true, for Example, that from the second Century, *Victor* ^p Bishop of *Rome*, caus'd much
Disturbance,

? Euseb: Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 27.

Disturbance, to maintain his Opinion upon this important Question, *What Day ought to be celebrated for Easter?* And that he excommunicated the Churches of *Asia*, because they celebrated that Feast the 14th Day of the Moon of *March*, and not the Sunday after, as he would have it? The unshaken Fidelity, with which he stood by the Christian Religion, for which he even suffer'd Martyrdom, had not made him incapable of being warm about Trifles, and offending against the Spirit of Peace and Charity, which the Gospel so forcibly recommends. St. *Irenæus* wrote to him upon that Head, and very lively censur'd his Proceeding. Will you have another Example of a Father of the Church, a Martyr likewise? See, in the 3d Century, the scandalous Broils, there were between St. *Cyprian*, Bishop of *Carthage* and *Stephen*, Bishop of *Rome*. The first had got it, to be decided in a Council, that such as had been baptiz'd by Hereticks should be rebaptiz'd. "*Stephen*,^a irritated, perhaps, that they had come to a Decision without first consulting him, was, on the contrary, of a very different Opinion. He wrote St. *Cyprian* a Letter, which is lost, where he rejected and condemn'd the Decisions of the Council of *Carthage*; excommunicated all those that had been present at it; and declar'd that they ought to receive, without rebaptizing them, all such as would join themselves to the Church, from whatsoever Heresy they came: Which gave Birth to a troublesome Schism between the Churches of *Africa*, and that of *Rome*. At that Time, *Pompey*, Bishop of *Sabrata*, a City of *Africa*, entreated the Bishop of *Carthage* to

^a St. *Cyprian's* Life, by le Clerc, Bibl. Univ. Tom. 12. p. 351. &c.

“ communicate to him the Opinion of *Stephen* ;
 “ whereupon *St. Cyprian* sent him his Letter with
 “ a Confutation of it, where he is very far from
 “ observing the Rules of Patience which he lays
 “ down in the Book, where he treats of that Vir-
 “ tue : As *Stephen*, on his Part, had violated them
 “ after a most shameful Manner. We may see
 “ from thence, that the Praises which our Martyr
 “ gives the Christians on that Head, at the Be-
 “ ginning of the same Book, where he says, that
 “ they do not boast at all of their Virtues, at the
 “ same Time that he boasts extreamly of them,
 “ were of those Sorts of Praises which teach us ra-
 “ ther what those ought to have been to whom
 “ they are given, than what they really were.
 “ He charges *Stephen* with having wrote with Ar-
 “ rogance, and divers other Things that made
 “ nothing to the Subject; of having contradicted
 “ himself, and talk’d like an ignorant and silly
 “ fellow.——Of taking the Part of Hereticks,
 “ against the Church, and betraying it : All this
 “ with extraordinary Warmth. It is true, he acts
 “ alike in all his Disputes, where he speaks only
 “ of Episcopal Discipline and Authority, without
 “ shewing much Good-Nature. And indeed it was
 “ no more the Custom, in those Days, to dispute
 “ with Moderation than it is at present.

“ In the Beginning of the *Fourth Century*,
 “ Eleven or Twelve Bishops met together at *Cirtha*
 “ in the Year 305, where they reproached one the
 “ other with enormous Crimes. The greatest
 “ Part of them had given up the Scriptures to the
 “ *Pagans*, to avoid Persecution, when a great
 H Num-

* Bibl. Univ. T. 24. p. 241. from *Fleury's Eccles. Hist.*
 T. 2. p. 580, &c.

“ Number of *Lay Christians* had suffered it with
 “ Constancy : Others of them had themselves
 “ thrown them into the Fire. One *Purpurius* of
 “ *Limata*, was accused of having put to Death
 “ Two of his Sister’s Children. Instead of excu-
 “ sing himself, he answered boldly : *As for me,*
 “ *I have killed, and I do kill those that are against me :*
 “ *Don’t oblige me to say any Thing further : Ye know*
 “ *very well, that I care for no Man breathing.* From
 “ the Time that the Emperors began to be
 “ Christians, Pleasures and Pastimes were intro-
 “ duced into the Church, and nothing was to be
 “ seen among the Ecclesiasticks, but Enmities
 “ and Divisions. And because that the Bishops
 “ were rich, and well look’d upon, all manner
 “ of Means were used to arrive at the Episcopacy ;
 “ and when it was obtained, the Bishop exercised
 “ a tyrannical Authority. These Disorders en-
 “ creased every Day, till they came to the
 “ Height at which we have seen them, as the
 “ Learned *Irish* Archbishop *Usher* shews, in a
 “ Treatise of his, cited in the Margin, by a great
 “ Number of Passages of celebrated Authors, who
 “ have left us frightful Pictures of the Corruption
 “ of their Times.” I have already cited *Gregory*
 of *Nazianzum* upon this Head, let us add here
 “ *Sulpitius Severus*, who lived in the same Century.
 “ When he’s speaking of the Manners of the
 “ Ecclesiasticks in his Time, as in Book the First,
 “ where, after having observed, that the Tribe
 “ of

† *Usher. de Eccles. &c. success. Bibl. Univ. Tom. 9. p. 5. &c.*
 T. 23. p. 366, &c.

‡ See of *Damasus Amm. Marcell. l. 27. c. -3.*

§ 9. Let. c.

¶ *Journ. de Trevoux. Edit. Amster. March & April, 1701.*
 Supplem.

“ of Levi had no Lot in the Division of Canaan,
 “ as the others had, he says, *That he will not pass*
 “ *over this Example in Silence, but that he freely gives*
 “ *it to be read by the Ministers of Churches. For it*
 “ *seems to me, adds he, that they have not only forgot*
 “ *that Precept, but that they even never knew it ; so*
 “ *great a Fondness have they in these Times for Riches,*
 “ *a Distemper which has got the Mastery of their Minds,*
 “ *like a Plague ! They*^x*pursue with Eagerness after Pos-*
 “ *sessions, they beautify their Farms, they*^y*lie upon*
 “ *Gold, they sell, they buy, in all Things they search*
 “ *after Gain. If there are any among them that seem*
 “ *to have better Maxims, so that they neither possess*
 “ *any Thing, nor Traffick ; they do that which is much*
 “ *more shameful, they expect Presents without doing any*
 “ *Thing, and they disgrace themselves by taking Re-*
 “ *wards, their Holiness being, as it were, set to sale.*
 “ We may likewise see the impartial Manner in
 “ which Sulpitius Severus relates the^z Persecution
 “ that was carried on against the *Priscillianists*,
 “ towards the End of the *Second* Book of his Sa-
 “ cred History ; where he openly blames the Pride
 “ and Cruelty of certain *Spanish* Bishops, who be-
 “ gun to call upon the Secular Arm against those
 “ People, and so managed Matters that some of
 “ them were put to Death. In his first Dialogue
 “ he likewise describes very clearly, the cruel
 “ Treatment which *Theophilus*, Bishop of *Alex-*
 “ *andria*, exercised against the Hereticks, and the
 “ Haughtiness of the Ecclesiasticks of *France*.”

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One

^x Cap. 23. Ed. Lipis. Bayle Rep. des Lettr. May 1684. p. 244, &c.

^y *Auro incubant, perhaps the Meaning of this is, that they love it so well they are continually looking on it. See Virg. Georg. 2. 507, Æn. 6. 610.*

^z *Pacati Panegy. of Theodos. c. 27. Ed. Cellar.*

One of the most famous Doctors of this Age, is St. *Jerom*, a Cholerick Man, if ever there was one, He had always extolled ^a *Origen*, without saying any thing of his Errors; whether it was that he did not think 'em very important, or because he thought they ought to be pardoned in him, on the Account of what was to be found good and useful in his Writings. But when the *Alians* began to make use of the Authority of *Origen*, and especially when *John* Bishop of *Jerusalem* who favoured the Opinions of the Catechist of *Alexandria*, had drawn upon himself the Hatred of St. *Jerom*; he inveighed, without Mercy, against *Origen*, whom before he had extolled to the Skies, and raised a violent ^b Persecution against the *Origenists*. *Ruffinus*, who had been a very particular Friend of St. *Jerom*'s, having declared for *Origen*, and having alledged, in his Defence, the Praises which St. *Jerom* had given him; our humble pacific Priest wrote against *Ruffinus*, a Book full of Rage and Bitterness. The same Spirit reigns in his other Works, where he had to do with People whom he hated. St. *Cyrl*, Patriarch of *Alexandria*, was, in the Opinion of the Abbot *du Pin*, an ambitious violent Man, who only seeking to enlarge his Authority, was no sooner raised to the Episcopal Dignity than by his own Authority

^a Le Clerc. Quæst. Hieron. Qu. 8. § 12.

^b In his Apology against Ruffin he boasts of it: Imperatorum quoque scripta, says he, quæ de Alexandria & Ægypto Origenistas pelli jubent, me suggerente dictata sunt: Ut Romanæ urbis pontifex miro eòs odio derefteretur, meum consilium fuit: Ut totus Orbis, post translationem tuam, in Origenis odia exarserit, quem antea simpliciter lectitabat, meus operatus est stylus.

^c This is taken from the Abstract in Nouv. de le Rep. &c. b. 1. Le Clerc. Bibl. Univ. T. 21. p. 19. Part 2.

" rity he drove out the *Novatians*, and despoiled
 " their Bishop of the Goods he enjoyed. He at-
 " tack'd the *Jews* in their Synagogues, at the
 " Head of h's Flock, took them away from them,
 " drove 'em out of *Alexandria*, and allowed the
 " Christians to plunder their Goods; founding
 " this Action, without doubt, on the holy Maxim
 " of the Bishop of *Hippo*, *That every Thing belongs*
 " *to the Faithful, and that the wicked have no Right*
 " *to what they possess.* St. Cyril had likewise a
 " Quarrel with *Orestes*, Governour of *Alexandria*,
 " upon whose Authority he was continually en-
 " croaching. Five Hundred Monks, supporting
 " their Bishop, one Day surrounded the Governour,
 " wounded him with a Stone, and had killed him,
 " had not his Guards and the People stopped their
 " Fury. This Action cost one of the Monks his
 " Life, who was taken and died upon the Rack.
 " St. Cyril caused him to be regarded as a Saint.
 " A celebrated *Pagan* Philosophess, named *Hypatia*,
 " was the Victim which the Partisans of the Bi-
 " shop sacrificed to the Manes of their Martyr.
 " She was cruelly torn in pieces, because she was
 " accused of having incensed the Governour against
 " the Prelate.

Would any one know what Sort of People the
 Ecclesiasticks were in the *Fifth* and following *Cen-*
turies? An ^d Author, who cannot with any Justice
 be suspected of meaning any ill to the Fathers,
 will inform us. " The Sects, *says he*, (of the
 " *Nestorians* and *Eutychians*) sprung partly from
 " Laziness and Superstition, partly from private
 " Resentments, and from the Envy and Malice
 " of

^d Dissertat. Histor. Rotterdam 1707. p. 8, 9. M. le Clerc.
 Epist. Eccl. & Crit. p. 167, &c.

“ of the Ecclesiasticks, gave the finishing Stroke
 “ to Persecution in Matters of Religion. It is
 “ true, that this persecuting Spirit was al-
 “ ready sprung up: But it had not as yet
 “ exercised its Tyranny, with all the Cruelties
 “ with which it was accompanied since that un-
 “ fortunate Age, when Men divided themselves
 “ about Opinions, in which there might be some-
 “ thing real, *but concerning which it would have been*
 “ *very easy to have agreed, if the Spirit of Christi-*
 “ *anity had presided in Ecclesiastical Assemblies.* From
 “ that Time, nothing was to be seen in the East
 “ but Proscriptions, Massacres, and Outrages. See
 “ how a Bishop, of the *Fifth Century*, who was
 “ persecuted for *Nestorianism*, speaks of it: “ *I pass*
 “ *over in Silence*, says he, *the Chains, Dungeons,*
 “ *Confiscations, Marks of Infamy, Massacres deserv-*
 “ *ing the highest Compassion, the Enormity of which is*
 “ *so great, that even such as have had the Misfortunes*
 “ *to be Witnesses of them, can scarce believe them*
 “ *credible. All these Tragedies were played by the Bi-*
 “ *shops.*—— Among them audaciousness passes for a
 “ *Mark of Courage*; they call their Cruelty Zeal, and
 “ *their Knavery is honoured with the Name of Wisdom.*
 “ This continually increased from that Time.
 “ The Emperor *Justinian* would not be behind
 “ hand in Zeal with the Prelates of the *Fifth*
 “ and *Sixth Centuries*. He did not think himself,
 “ says *Procopius*, § *guilty of Murder, when those he*
 “ *condemned to die, made Profession of another Reli-*
 “ *gion than his.* The World in these Unfortunate
 “ Ages, saw the most frightful Cruelties practised.
 “ Sieges

* Amm. Marcell. l. 22. c. 5. p. 233.

† Etherius Episc. Tyanorum inter opera Theodoriti, T. 3. p. 628, 689.

§ Anecdor. p. 60: Ed. Alemanni.

“ Sieges were held out in Monasteries ; Battles
 “ fought in Councils ; Men entered with armed
 “ Force into Churches ; all those were treated^b
 “ with the utmost Cruelty, who were suspected
 “ of favouring Opinions, which often were under-
 “ stood by none, not even by those who defended them
 “ with the greatest Stiffness and Obstinacy.” See here
 “ these great Lights of the Church, these holy
 “ Fathers, that are put upon us as *Men truly*
 “ *pious and knowing.*”

But the principal Question here is of the right Turn of Mind, Solidity of Thought, and Extent of Knowledge of these Fathers. Allow me to apply to the Fathers, the following Verses of a modern *French* Satyrist, who has been dead some time.

*Qu'on vante en eux l'honneur, la foi, la probité,
 Qu'on prise leur candeur et leur sincérité,
 Qu'ils aient eu quelquefois une humeur debonnaire,
 On le veut, j'y souscris, et suis prêt de me taire :
 Mais que comme un modèle on vante leurs Ecrits,
 Qu'on le fasse passer pour de fort bons Esprits,
 Comme aux Rois des Auteurs, qu'on leur donne l'Empire,
 Ma bile alors s'échauffe, & je brûle d'écrire, &c.*

The Instances I have cited above, of the gross Mistakes, and false Thoughts of the Fathers ; that which I have said of their Works, where one finds an infinite Number of Lownesses, cited with great Elogiums by the bigotted Admirers of these ancient Doctors of the Church ; the great Number of like Passages, which divers Authors have remark'd and censured as Occasionⁱ offered : All this would

^b Eutychii Annales, p. 155.

ⁱ See the Reflections of Phereponus (Mr. le Clerc) on St. Augustin in the Appendix Augustin.

would dispense with me from alledging any. However, I shall here give a small Specimen, by which one may judge, at first Sight, what was the Turn of Thinking that prevailed in those Times.

JUSTIN Martyr, in the 5th^k Chapter of his *First Apology*, says, *that the bad Demons formerly appeared, that they committed Adultery with Women, defiled Boys, &c.* All this founded only on *Genes.* 6. 4. misinterpreted. The most ancient Fathers likewise vented this Opinion, as certain, one after the other, as a learned Editor of this Father has observed. *Justin* finds the *Cross*^m in the Sails and Masts of Ships, in Ploughs, Mattocks, &c.

St. *Irenæus*, in the Opinion of *Photius*,ⁿ *has corrupted, by strange trifling Reasonings, the Simplicity and strict Truth of the Opinions of the Church.* “What is there^o more poor, for Example, than “the Reasons he uses to prove that there are “four Gospels, because there are four principal “Regions of the World, the East, the West, the “South, and the North; or because that the “Building of the Church is founded on the Gospel, “and that there must be four Pillars to support “a Building. *Theophylact* has not succeeded better, “when he says, that it is because the Gospel “teaches us the four Cardinal Virtues; or because “that the Gospel contains Doctrines, Precepts, “Promises, and Threatnings. Don’t the five “Books

^k See le Clerc. *Bibl. Chois.* T. 2. p. 335, 336.

^l Grabe *Spicileg. patr. &c.* See also *Petavii Dogm. Theol.* Tom. 3. Tract. de Angelis l. 3. c. 2.

^m 1 *Apol.* l. 72. *Bibl. Chois.* T. 3. Art. 8. & *Bibl. Univ.* T. 6. p. 22, &c.

ⁿ Cod. 120.

^o Bernard. *Nouv. de la Rep. des Lettr.* Decemb. 1703. p. 635.

“ Books of *Moses* contain the same Things? St.
 “ *Maximus* and *Theophanes* seem to have succeeded
 “ still worse, when they advance that there were
 “ but four Gospels, because there were but four
 “ Elements. Mr. *Fabricius* has Reason to say, that
 “ if there were five, three, or a hundred Gospels,
 “ there would not have been wanting as good
 “ Reasons why there were no more, or no less.
 “ Such Lownesses as these, reflect Disgrace on Hu-
 “ mane Reason. They might perhaps pass in
 “ Conversation, where one does not always ma-
 “ turely consider what one says; but when one
 “ meets with them written seriously, in Works
 “ composed for the Public, and to be handed
 “ down to Posterity, the least one can do, in my
 “ Opinion, to revenge ones self on the Authors
 “ who have obliged us to read such Things, is to
 “ take the Liberty to disapprove of them.

“ St. *Cyprian*,^p when he treats of *Ecclesiastical*
 “ *Discipline*, is continually citing the Passages of
 “ the *Old Testament*, as well as of the *New*, where
 “ one meets with the *Latin Word Disciplina*, with-
 “ out having any Regard to Circumstances. See
 “ here the Reasoning he uses against *Lucian*, (a
 “ Priest and Martyr of *Carthage*, who was for re-
 “ ceiving into the Communion of the Church such
 “ as had sunk under Persecution, without
 “ obliging them to pass through all the Degrees
 “ of Penitence:) *The Lord having commanded to*
 “ *baptize the Nations in the Name of the Father,*
 “ *of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and declared,*
 “ *that their past Sins are pardoned in Baptism; this*
 “ *Man knowing neither the Commandments, nor the*
 “ *Laws, commands us to give Peace, and pardon Sin*
 “ in

I

“ in

“ *in the Name of Paul.* It is easy to see, that
 “ there is an infinite Difference between the
 “ Pardon which God grants to Sins committed
 “ before Baptism received in his Name, and
 “ remitting certain Ecclesiastical Penalties by the
 “ Authority of a Martyr, who commands it. In
 “ his Treatise of the *Unity of the Church*, he
 “ maintains, that the Indivisibility of the Church
 “ was figured out by our Lord’s Garment, without
 “ a Seam. — He says, that Men ought to be
 “ liberal to the Poor, because that, as by Baptism
 “ we obtain the Pardon of all the Sins we have
 “ committed before our being baptized, by virtue
 “ of the Blood of *Jesus Christ*, so by *Alms* we ex-
 “ piate those committed *after* Baptism. — When his
 “ endeavouring to overthrow the false Excuses,
 “ which are sometimes made, to be exempted
 “ from giving Alms, he relates that of those who
 “ say, that the Multitude of their Children does
 “ not allow them to be so liberal as they could
 “ wish to be. He answers to that, that the more
 “ Children one has, the more one ought to give,
 “ because that one ought to expiate the Sins, pu-
 “ rify the Conscience, and deliver the Souls of a
 “ greater Number of Persons.

St. *Jerom*, “^r who recommends Celibacy as much
 “ as he can, and who, after the Manner of Ora-
 “ tors, often makes Arrows of all Sorts of Wood,
 “ uses this fine Reason against *Jovinian* : *Calibes*,
 “ says he, *quod cælo digni sunt, inditum nomen* ; This
 “ Name was given them, because they are worthy of
 “ Heaven.” If you would see a Heap of Sophisms,
 and

^a Ibid. p. 283.

^r Ibid. p. 338, 339. out of the Book de Opere & Eleemosynis,
 p. 197, 205.

^f Rep. des Lettr. May 1702. p. 502.

and false Reasonings, that prove nothing, or that prove that Marriage is in itself Criminal, you need only read the rest of this Book against *Jovinian*, and that which he wrote against *Helvidius* ^c; in which he attacks second Marriages. He boasts himself, in the last Work, of acting the Rhetorician and the Declaimer: *Rhetorici sumus, & in morem Declamatorum paululum lusimus*. In another Place he brags ^v of Writing with great Precipitation, and without giving himself the Trouble to think much upon his Commentaries. Accordingly he often contradicts himself. He dares own, without Disguise, that in his ^w polemical Works, he only aimed at answering his Adversaries, and puzzling them, without troubling himself whether what he said were true or not. He justifies this Conduct of his by the Example of *Origen*, *Methodius*, *Eusebius*, *Apollinarius*, and other Apologists of the Christian Religion, who, according to him, *did the same against the Pagans; making use of very doubtful and problematical Arguments, and maintaining not what they thought, but what the Interest of the Dispute required*. Further, he pretends that he only imitates *Jesus Christ*, and *St. Paul*, who maintained, as he pretends, *both Sides of the Question, according as it was convenient for them*.

The great *St. Augustin* alone, is able to furnish out Matter sufficient to compose a large Volume of Lownesses: I shall content my self with setting down two Examples. Explaining that Passage of *Genesis* 3. 14. where the *Latin Version*, which he

I 2

followed,

^c Le Clerc. Quæst. Hieronym. 8.

^v Comm. in Abdiam, at the End, and Præfat. 1. 2. in Epist. ad Ephes.

^w This Passage is cited at large in Sentim. de quelque, Theolog. d'Hollande, p. 368, 369.

followed, had it, as the *Septuagint*, *Thou shalt go upon thy Breast, and upon thy Belly, all the Days of thy Life*: By the *Breast*, says he, * is to be understood *Pride*; by the *Belly*, the *Desires of the Flesh*; and by that which is added, *Thou shalt eat the Dust*, is meant *Curiosity*, which enters only into Things temporal and earthly. By *Curiosity*, he understands *Avarice*: And thus it is that he draws Moral Reflections from the Scripture. His Remark upon the Title of the *Psalms* is very pleasant. "The Copiers did not use to put " before the first *Psalms*, *Psalms primus*, as is done " now, probably because they thought it unnecessary, since one could not mistake, seeing " it at the Beginning of the Book, and followed " by the second *Psalms*. St. *Augustine* finds out a " much more mysterious Reason." As this *Psalms*, says he, introduces God himself speaking, for that Reason it has no Title, for fear any Thing should be preferred to the Word of God, or that he should be called First, who has not been called First, but One: And thus it could not, and ought not to have any Title, for fear, if it had the Title of First, it might be thought the best, only from the Order of Number, and not from its own Authority. Or, adds he, as we have already said, least it should be thought that the *Psalms*ist preferr'd any Thing to the Word of God, if he had put a Title before this *Psalms*; for if it had been called the first, it might have been understood, preferably to others. Thus it is the only one, concludes he, that has no Title, that so it may manifestly appear, how much it is distinguished above others. " Pray try if you can make the Conclusion agree with the Premises. I

* L. 2. de *Genesis*, contra *Manich.* C. 17. See *Observat.* Hall. T. 4. Obs. 5.

† *Sentim.* de quelq. *Theol.* d'Holl. p. 362.

I am weary of transcribing so many Things, as tedious, as they are injudicious. There is enough, already to paint to the Life, the Character of the Authors we are treating of, and to let us know *ex ungue Leonem*. I have designedly chosen Examples, that have been already produc'd, and which are to be met with in Books, that are very common. We shall see from thence, that it does not very well become our zealous Defenders of the Fathers, to insist upon our taking it on their Words, that they were Men *truly pious and knowing*, against so many Proofs, known by all Mankind, which make it as clear as the Sun at Noon Day, that their Vertues in general were very middling, and mix'd with great Failings, those of divers of them even very suspected of Hypocrisy; and as to what regards the Qualities of their Understanding, that it was often false and disorderly; that they had much more Imagination than good Sense; that they were destitute of a great many necessary Assistances to encrease and perfect their Knowledge, and that they ^a neglected those they had in their Power, or might procure themselves; that thus ^b their Knowledge could be but very bounded; in a Word, that the most ingenious of them, are in nothing comparable to the Authors of our Age, neither for their Solidity, Stile, Order, or Method. Can one consistently with Candour and Sincerity, regard the Fathers as Men very judicious and very knowing, after all we have cited from their Works?

The

^a See les Lettr. Crit. & Eccles. de M. le Clerc. Ep. 4 p. 107. &c. and the Bibl. Chois. Tom. 11. p. 102. &c.

^b The very learning of those that pass for the most learn'd, was very common, and cost them very little, as has been very justly observ'd by M. Bernard, Rep. des Lettr. March 1699. p. 269.

The most exact and most Understanding Genius may be deceiv'd, I own, and give into some false Thoughts: But it will have at least some Plausibleness, and not happen often; and I maintain that a Man of moderate good Sense, will never fall into the Excesses, into which almost all the Fathers have gone. None but such as are capable of the like Lownesses, or strangely blinded by a Spirit of Party, can so highly extol those that have utter'd them. Unfortunately for them, we don't live in an Age, in which one may act thus with Impunity. The public is no longer the Dupe of these Sorts of grave Affirmations, destitute of Proofs, and on the contrary bely'd by an infinite Number of decisive Reasons, presented to the View of the World. It is bantering and flattering ones self in a very gross Manner, to imagine, that without so much as having attempted to disprove Facts so certain as those which we have advanc'd, one can ward off the Charge by such a pitiful Argument as this: *If the Christian Religion had not for its Propagators, Men truly pious and knowing, what Opinion ought one to have of it?*

We are not oblig'd to give the Reasons of God's Conduct, of what he does, or what he does not; of what he permits, or what he conducts by the hidden Ways of his Providence. Instead of saying: *Such or such a Thing, is contrary to the Designs of God, or to his Vertues; therefore God could not do or suffer it;* we believe, and have good Ground for it, that we should reason thus: *God has done or suffer'd such or such a Thing, therefore there is nothing in it, contrary to his Designs, or to his Vertues,* although our weak and bounded Understanding, does not always see clearly how to make this agree with the Views and infinite Perfections

Perfections of this sovereign Being : Nevertheless, as we are not forbid to look into, and modestly propose the Reasons he might have had, not to interpose in an extraordinary Manner, to prevent certain Things ; if we will a little give the Reins to our Thought in a Matter of Fact of which we're disputing, we shall easily discover sufficient to satisfy ourselves, and at the same Time, wherewithal to stop the Mouths of those, who would have it that God acts according to their Fancy. If, " on this Side the " Apostles, we find nothing but what is very " indifferent, and very confus'd, in this first " Origine of Christianity, it is in all Probability, " as Mr. *le Clerc* ^c has very well observ'd, that " none might be able to say in the Ages to come, " that there were at that Time, Genius's capable of forming such a Religion as is the Christian, and to counterfeit Books to its first Authors ; since we see nothing, after them, that comes near their Writings. Not only the Heads of other Sects, that sprung up in those Times, but likewise those that profess'd to follow the Apostles only, don't come near the Manner of Writing of those holy Men. Nevertheless in this Manner of Writing, there is so much Simplicity and Nature, if we may so speak, that one sees clearly from thence, that they are not themselves the Inventors of that which they tell us, but that they were beholden, for all that they knew, to *Jesus Christ*, and to the Spirit which they had receiv'd." Certainly, if we consider the Books of the New Testament, on the Side of the Manner of reasoning, no one of

^c *Bibl. Choif. Tom. 4. p. 356. 357.*

of the Fathers of the Church, made as they were, could ever have compos'd Works, in which good Sense reigns throughout, as we see it in the Gospels, and the Epistles of the Apostles. We may say, too, that God, by permitting the Fathers of the Church to be so incorrect in their Writings, and often so very irregular in their Conduct, design'd to shew that the Christian Religion, which was to continue to the End of the World, supports itself by itself, notwithstanding the small Understanding and Sanctity of those who ought to have been the great Supports of it. If there was any Thing in it, contrary to the Wisdom of God, or which was capable of doing Hurt to the Christian Religion ; it might be prov'd, from the same Principle, that there could not be under Christianity, Ages of a general Ignorance and Corruption, especially among the Clergy, as those that preceded the Reformation ; and thus our zealous Defenders of the Fathers, would have as good a Foundation to maintain against the Faith of History, that those Ages, were not such as they are generally believ'd to have been.

But utterly to confound those that are not ashamed to use a miserable Argument, in which is not to be found the least Shadow of Reason, on whatsoever Side you examine it ; let us add in a few Words three or four Reflections. The first is, that neither *Jesus Christ*, nor his Apostles, have either said, or any where given us to understand, that such as were to be look'd upon after them, as *Propagators of the Christian Religion*, must needs be *Men truly pious and knowing*. The Parable of the ^d *Tares*, sown by the Enemy ; and that of the
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^d Matth. 13, 24 &c. See les Epist. Crit. & Eccl. de M. le Clerc. p. 121, 122. &c. and his *Treatise of Incredulity* p. 189. &c.

Net, ^e that takes all Sorts of Fish; shew sufficiently, that in the Christian Church, the Wicked should be mix'd with the Good, that so these might not be uppermost, and appear with more Advantage than others. Our Lord foretold the Divisions, which would be produc'd by the Ignorance, vain Subtilties, Rashness, Presumption, and the Passions of the *Propagators* of his Religion. And St. Paul assures ^f us, *That there must be Heresies, that they which are approv'd, may be made manifest*; that is to say, that so a Mind free from Prejudices, and which does not judge of Things by the Appearance, might discern those that are Truly and Sincerely attach'd to Truth and Vertue. When the Apostles speak to us, of that which was to happen in the Church, they express themselves after such a ^g Manner, as to give us Ground to think, that the Ecclesiasticks should not be ordinarily the Men in the World, the most Pious and the most Knowing. Even in the Time of the Apostles, there were Firebrands and false Doctors, to whose Rashness, and seducing, those holy Men were oblig'd to oppose themselves. In those Days flourish'd one *Diotrephes*, ^h a vain ambitious Man, who spoke ill of St. John, who would not receive those whom that holy Apostle held Brethren, but cast them out of the Church.

The second Remark I have to make is, that, in the first Ages, as well as in the following, those that made the greatest Noise in the Church, and who had the greatest Reputation, were not always those that had the most good Sense, Knowledge, and ⁱ Vertue. At that Time, as at present, it was not ordinarily Merit, that rais'd to the
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^e See Luke 6. 51. ^f 1 Cor. 11. 19. ^g See 2 Thess. 2. 3. &c. 1 Tim. 4, 1. &c. 2 Peter 3, 3. Jude v. 18. ^h 2 Ep. of St. John v. 9, 10.

ⁱ See what Gregory of Nazianzum, says in his Time, in his Life publish'd by M. le Clerc. Bibl. Univ. Tom. 18. p. 56, 89, 92, 119

highest Ecclesiastical Dignities. Thus, notwithstanding the bad Tastes and bad Manners, that reign'd more or less in every Age, we cannot in the least doubt, that there were both among the People, and among the Clergy, Men more judicious, more knowing, more wise, more reasonable, and more pious, than those whose Names and Writings, are celebrated among us. I leave People to judge, to whom of the two, the Name of *Propagator of the Christian Religion* is most justly due, whether to those we know, or to those we know nothing of, because that the others, took care to hinder them from appearing in their Time, and that their Memory should not pass to Posterity with Advantage. Among the last, some through Timorousness, others through Prudence, or the Impossibility they found of succeeding, were loth to engage with Men stronger than themselves: And if any one dar'd to oppose the Doctors, that had gain'd the Admiration of the Populace, they were soon made to repent their Rashness: Witness the Affair of *Vigilantius* with *St. Jerom.*

I observe in the third Place, that with Respect to the Interests of the Christian Religion, we stand in no need of the Works of Ecclesiastical Antiquity, but as so many Historical Pieces, which prove that which pass'd, and that which was believ'd in the Time of each Writer. An Author,^k whom I have already cited, acknowledges it expressly: *When the Protestants, says he, consult the Fathers and the Councils, they use that Study only to learn the History of Opinions, and to trace out the Beginnings of Error, very far from looking there, for the Foundations of their Faith.* So that it is ridiculous, to cry out after this, that all is lost, if we have not a great Veneration for the Fathers, and if we speak freely good or ill of them. The very Divisions, which their Ignorance, their Passions, and their Subtilties, have

^k Diff. Historiques, &c. p. 217.

have produc'd in the Church, are of no small Use to assure us, that no considerable Corruption is crept into the Holy Scripture, since that one Party would not have fail'd to have reproach'd the other with it.

My forth and last Remark is, that notwithstanding the little Exactness of the Fathers, which led them into divers Errors, notwithstanding their very great Fondness of vain Subtilties, and which made them neglect Things more Necessary; the fundamental Doctrines of Religion, and Morality, were preserv'd among ¹ Christians, in the most dark and wicked Ages. If there have been divers false Things added and mix'd if they have not been unfolded, and push'd all their Lengths, is this the Fault of the Gospel? But in short, Providence has boldly justify'd itself, if we may so speak, in the Eyes of all who without any Reason, throw upon it the Negligence and bad Taste of Men. God has rais'd up Men, who have introduc'd a better Manner of Study and Reasoning. We learn every Day more and more, to rightly interpret the Holy Scripture, and to treat of Morality, as it ought to be treated. A good Taste gains Ground, and there is Reason to hope, that in Time it will make considerable Progress. Perhaps a Time may come, in which the Fathers and your fond Admirers, will be esteem'd according to your Deserts.

But it is Time to end this long Digression. I thought it necessary, once for all, entirely to destroy the only subterfuge that was left for those who boast themselves of having defended the Fathers. Let us now take up again the Thread of our History of Morality. After that which we have said of the little Care the Doctors of the Church of the first Six Centuries took to cultivate

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¹ See M. le Clerc. de eligenda inter Christianos Dissidententes Sententia, at the End of the last Edition of Grotius de ver. Rel. Christ. §. 7.

it, it would be superfluous to run over the following Ages, in which Ignorance and Corruption increasing more and more, arrived at length to such a Pitch, that they scarce left any Spark of good Sense and Vertue, especially among the Ecclesiasticks. To say nothing of the great Number of ridiculous Superstitions, and the prodigious Idolatry which entirely disfigur'd Christianity: Thousands of detestable Maxims were establish'd worthy the Darknes of those unfortunate Ages. The Bishop of Rome, ^m caused himself to be regarded as invested with a Power to depose Kings, whom he should judge to be Hereticks, and to absolve their Subjects from the Oath of Fidelity. An ⁿ Italian, named John Giglis, ^o or des Lis (*de Liliis*) who was made Bishop of Worcester, by the Authority of the Pope, received at the same time a Right to pardon all Sorts of Crimes, and to allow People to retain the Goods of another, after what Manner soever they were acquired, provided they gave some Part to the Pope's Commissaries or his Substitutes.

The Light of the Reformation re-established considerably among Protestants, Purity of Doctrine and Practice. But the Reformers themselves, and their Successors, have they always followed the Spirit of Christianity, and of the Reformation? The frightful Doctrine of Persecution for the Sake of Religion, has it not been maintained in two express Treatises, one of Calvin, ^p the other of ^q Beza? And did not Calvin actually put his Principles

^m The Canon of the Council of Lateran held at Rome, is translated in Bibl. Univ. T. 9. p. 39. See also Tom. i. p. 387. and *M. de Pin* de la puissance Eccles. & Temporelle, 1707. ⁿ See Seckendorf Comm. Hist. & Apolog. de Lutheranism, &c. l. 1.

^o See Wharton's Anglia Sacra Supplem. ad Hist. Eccl. Vigorn.

^p Fidelis expositio errorum Mich. Serveti, & brevis eorundem refutatio: Ubi docetur jure gladii coercendos esse Hæreticos.

^q De Hæreticis a Magistratu puniendis. Note, the Friends of Justus Lipsius, in answer to some Protestant who had exclaimed against the Opinion

ciples in Practice on the Occasion of *Servetus*? Have we as yet, in these Times, been able to draw from abundance of People, (who have themselves felt, for so long Time, and in so many Shapes, the fatal Effects of Persecution) a very express Acknowledgment, that all Persecution, all Molestation, great or little, direct or indirect, for the Sake of Religion, is a true Tyranny? Have we not seen Persons, who have dared to attribute the Progress of Christianity to this Manner of converting People, and who have maintained, *that Paganism, would be standing at this Day, and that three Quarters of Europe would be still Pagans, had Constantine and his Successors, used all their Authority to abolish Christianity.* Are there not others that revive the pernicious Maxim of St. *Augustine*, that such as do not believe in *Jesus Christ*, cannot be esteemed lawful Possessors of the Goods of the Earth? If we consider that few good Books of Morality are to be met with, especially in our Language, in Comparison of that infinite Number of Books of Controversy that overflow Libraries, and Booksellers Shops, we shall readily conclude, that the Study of Morality is very much neglected. The public Discourses appear not very instructive in this Respect; and, if any one doubt of it, see here authentic Testimonies which may fully convince him. Mr. *La Placette*, Pastor of the French Church at

Opinion of the Punishment of Hereticks, which he maintains in his Politicks, and in his Treatise de unâ Religione, did not fail to retort, by alledging the Affair of Servetus, and citing a Passage of Beza, where it is expressly said, That it is more absurd to pretend that one ought not to punish Hereticks, than it would be to maintain that we ought to let sacrilegious Persons and Parricides go unpunished; Hereticks, adds he, are infinitely more wicked than any of those Wretches. See the Life of Lipsius, by Aubert le Mire, T. I. of the Works of that great Critick, p. 16. Edit. Vefal. Droits des deux Souverains, &c. p. 286. See Dict. de M. Bayle T. I. p. 425, 426. Edit. 2. Remark H. See P. Molin Anatom. Arminianismi, c. 32. Dist. 18. Maccov. Distinct. c. 3. § 18. Theol. quest. loc. 25. quest. 19. Voëtius, &c.

at *Copenhagen*, in his Treatise of *Restitution*, introduces People speaking, who being lost, for having neglected that important Duty, will complain of their Preachers at the Day of Judgment, in the following Terms : “ We might have done
 “ very well, without so many vain Speculations,
 “ so many frivolous Enquiries, so many abstracted
 “ Questions, so many useless Disputes upon Mat-
 “ ters in which we had no Concern, and which
 “ have made up the principal Matter of your
 “ Sermons. We don’t see any body that is
 “ damn’d, for not having known a Hundred
 “ Things which you have taught us with Accu-
 “ racy and Earnestness, which you might have
 “ spared your selves. But we are in this mis-
 “ erable State for having neglected our Duty, of
 “ which you never told us one Word. You have
 “ let us approach the Table of the Lord, without
 “ telling us, that it was coming unworthily, and
 “ taking our Condemnation, to come without ha-
 “ ving beforehand emptied our Hands and our
 “ Coffers, of all that we had wrongfully ac-
 “ quired. You have told us of the Mercy of God.
 “ You have press’d us to implore it with all our
 “ Heart, and with a lively Confidence, without
 “ telling us one Word of the Impossibility there is
 “ in obtaining the Effects, whilst we persist in In-
 “ justice, and of Consequence in Impenitence, as
 “ we doubtless do, when we neglect to restore that
 “ which we have wrongfully taken. In a Word,
 “ you have left us ignorant of these capital Truths
 “ at the Time when they might have been of Ser-
 “ vice to us, and you are the Cause that we learn
 “ them but now, when they only serve to render
 “ us inexcusable, and convince us that we justly
 “ perish.” Mr. *Ostervald*, Pastor of *Neufchattel* in
Switzerland, makes a like Acknowledgment. See it
 here, such as I find it related by a third Minister,
 Mr.

Mr. ^v Bernard, that learned and judicious Continuator of the *Nouvelles de le Republique des Lettres*.

" Ignorance, *says he*, concerning the Duties of Christianity, is both very general, and very great.

" There are some which an infinite Number of People never think of at all. The Author instances,

" for Example, the Duty of Restitution: He tells us, that Mr. *la Placette* having publish'd, some

" Time ago, a Treatise upon that Subject, the Book was read as a singular Book, the Subject of which

" was new and curious, and that there were some who treated that Doctrine of *Restitution*, as a new

" and very severe Doctrine.—Some there are, that pretend that Morality ought not to be so much insisted on, that some Allowances ought to be made

" to Human Nature; whilst they strongly insist upon speculative Opinions, and even upon some that

" are not very important. There are some who have gone so far as to say, that it was dangerous to insist

" so much upon Morality, that the so doing is a Mark of Heresy. Divines have dared to publish

" Books, in which they seem to have attempted to decry good Works. Ought one to be surprized,

" that People led by such Conductors, give themselves no more Trouble to practise them?—

" The Doctors appointed to teach Religion, quarrel upon very usefess Questions; and, whilst the Pastor

" is busy in his Study, or in the Pulpit, to confute an Adversary whom he never saw, or to

" combate an Error which is unknown to his Flock, the Sheep lose themselves, his Hearers continue

" prepossessed with the most Mortal Errors concerning Morality, and engaged in their bad Habits."

See here the Depositions of unsuspected irreproachable Witnesses. I wish I could say, to the Praise of

those to whom these just Reproaches are directed,

that

^v Mr. Bernard late Professor of Philosophy and Mathematicks in the University, and Pastor of the Walloon Church at Leyden.

^v Novemb. 1699. Account of the Book entitied, *des Source de la Corruption*, p. 582, 583, 585.

that they begin to open their Eyes, and alter their Method. But I fear very much, that the greatest Part of them have been already a long Time under this Prepossession, so contray to the Obligations of their Ministry, that an ardent Zeal for speculative Opinions, which don't cost much to understand, and in the Support of which they find their Account, dispenses with their applying themselves to a serious Study of Morality, which requires profound Meditation, and the Knowledge of ² more than common Places. This would be a good Deed, if they would let alone those who do their best in what they themselves ought to do. But their Predecessors have set 'em an Example, and they are unwilling to degenerate. In Reality, who was it that introduced, in the past Age, the methodical Study of the Law of Nature and first undertook to give a System of this so vast and so necessary a Science? They were not Ecclesiasticks, or Divines by Profession; It was the illustrious *Grotius*, whose Memory will always be blessed, upon this Head, by all sincere Lovers of Truth and Vertue; though he had not acquired to himself an immortal Reputation, by a great many Performances of another Nature, all excellent in their Kind. Nevertheless, when that admirable Treatise of *the Law of War and Peace* (*De Jure belli & pacis*) appeared, the Ecclesiasticks, instead of thanking the Author for it, took up Arms against him: And he was not only put in the *Index Expurgatorius* of the Roman Catholic Inquisitors, (I should not be surprized at that) but likewise divers Protestant Divines endeavoured to run it down. The same Thing happened to the Book I am here giving you the Translation of. The Jesuits of *Vienna* caused it to be prohibited; and it was not the Fault of divers Protestant Divines of *Sweden* and *Germany*, that this excellent Work did not every where meet with the same Lot.

² See *M. Bernard's Reflections in his Rep. des Lettr. April 1706. Art. 1* which drew upon him a senseless Libel from a little French Minister.

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